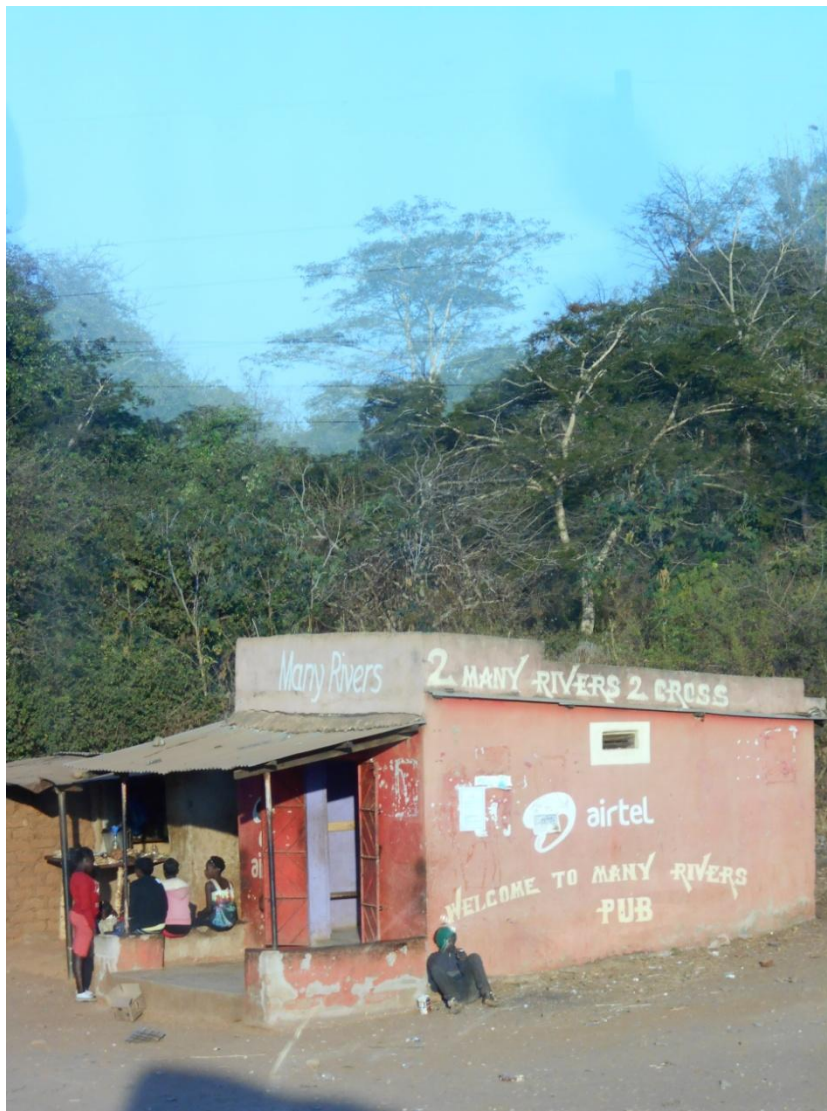


*SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter*

*Edition XXV*

*Summer 2018, U.S.A.*



*To my best friend Mark, Thank you for reminding me to love wherever I am and whatever I am.*



*“My hope and belief is that Africa can be a model for the world in finding a balance between the needs of people and the needs of wild places. Sound far-fetched? No more so than that impossible bridge across the Zambezi.”*

*~ Chris Johns, Editor-in-Chief, National Geographic*

## *SSAAP in the News*

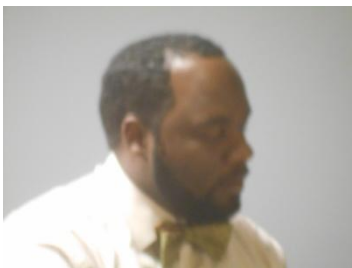


**SSAAP has recently had the pleasure of working with a project out of Denver, called 303 Live. 303 Live deals with Global Affairs, with issues surrounding various communities of the world, as well as with Africa. Mr. Joseph Graves, Director of 303 Live, is passionate about his cause of informing the world about the world.**

**Feel free to browse this video interview regarding SSAAP's Arts Initiative:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/303LiveMedia/videos/10156663070349767/>**

**<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=52Aji48BV44>**



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## *SSAAP in Social Media*

**Please feel free to browse SSAAP's Facebook page as well our new Instagram page – thank you deeply for the young woman who has committed herself to this.**

## *We'Moon/SSAAP 2018 Arts Initiative*

One of SSAAP's most loyal partnerships, We'Moon of Wolf Creek, Oregon, U.S.A. works with SSAAP to inspire, commission, and generate revenue for women in all three African nations SSAAP serves: Zambia, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.

We'Moon gathers its artisans from all over the world to submit poetry, art, or a combination of writing and art for its annual datebook: *Gaia Rhythms for Womyn* ('women'). The datebook is highly inspirational, filled with information on lunar cycles, astrology, womyn's empowerment, planetary aspects, and other tools for wisdom.



Through its datebook sales, We'Moon gives back to the world by working hand-in-hand with service organizations which promote, enhance, inspire and uplift the inherent beauty within the feminine experience.

SSAAP has been fortunate enough to work with We'Moon since 2016! And SSAAP has a contract to work with We'Moon again in 2018! We couldn't be more thrilled by this opportunity. SSAAP works, through contracts, with womyn in the villages of all three of its African countries to weave baskets, sew, create jewelry and carve wooden artifacts to send back to Wolf Creek, Oregon. We'Moon then creates gift packs that include one of these artisan pieces and info about SSAAP and the artist, along with We'Moon goodies, and makes them available during the holidays. They're a big hit!

If you are interested in purchasing a We'Moon datebook, submitting poetry, art, or writing to We'Moon, or simply want to learn more about these incredible womyn and their community in Wolf Creek, visit their website:

[www.wemoon.ws](http://www.wemoon.ws)

If you wish to place an order, send an email to:

*Weorder at wemoon dot ws*

The ongoing partnership between We'Moon and SSAAP has been an infinite blessing; thank you to Barb, Leah, Susie, and all the beautiful staff in Oregon.

# Water Wells and Cashew Project in Sierra Leone

**Rather than continue in my voice, I would rather spice the newsletter up by sharing the exact words of my main counterpart in Sierra Leone, Taylor Sorie Kamara. He is an Agricultural Expert, working in the fields of four-legged animal-rearing, farming, seed-germination, and dabbling in veterinary skills. Taylor is a strong worker, a loyal counterpart, and most importantly: a sincerely incredible friend.**

**SSAAP is assisting Taylor so that he may participate in the Gandhian Studies course that Radiance and I participated in Gujarat, India from October 2017-January 2018. He has already been accepted for two years in a row to the course but due to financial limitations, has been unable to attend.**

**Our mutual dream is to work together, after he studies the course in India, to implement Gandhian values of *Satyagraha* through nonviolent resistance, work at the governmental level of Sierra Leone where the seeds of structural violence are planted, and create small rural libraries housing books about human rights, Gandhian teachings, activism and nonviolent resistance in rural Port Loko, Sierra Leone. SSAAP will [hopefully!] be working with Navajivan Press of Ahmedabad, India to donate Gandhian literature to all three countries SSAAP serves in Africa. SSAAP wishes to partner with Taylor on a new endeavor that will benefit Sierra Leone at-large, as well leading to greater sustainability of the cashew farms and the animal-rearing ventures SSAAP has developed in rural Sierra Leone.**

**An email from Taylor, below. Before reading,**

- **'pikin' = child (in Krio)**
- **Francis = Vet Officer SSAAP works with on animal projects in Sierra Leone**
  - **Each Cashew Plantation Project is given \$250 USD,**
- **Food grows very quickly and very easily in Sierra Leone (it is a jungle place with excessive moisture, the wettest country in West Africa):**

*I am fully ready for the projects come the time when you will come back to Sierra Leone i have already identify the 2 additional communities for the cashew nut, the pig production and fish farm with Francis. Francis is fully ready and he is always asking. This is how i want us to expend the 250dollars for the 2 additional villages for the cashew production: a) 50dollars is for the seeds (b) 70dollars for tools (c) 50dollars for working gears such as rain boots, rain coats, bowl hats, hand gloves (d) 50dollars for chemicals and fertilizers and (e) 30 dollars for administrative cost. We have completed 3 villages with almost 5000 cashew nuts sown. We will be grateful if our dream come true in the other projects mention above. Have a nice day and say hello to the pikin Amara.*

*Always love you and Amara.  
Taylor Sorie*

\*

*Good news for doing the water wells.pig project and the large scale farming i will be grateful if we have the 4 water wells in Port Loko because we have already identify three areas. we can have the one in Bombali where are going to do the pig project. Hoping to be in India in the next few months and to meet in sierra leone after that so we can implement the projects at hand.*

*love u in my heart.  
Taylor Sorie.*

\*

**Please note that it has been Heather's personal lifelong mission to give every village in Sierra Leone a well before the end of my life. Sierra Leone is a small country; it is a possibility! SSAAP has raised funding for 9 hand-dug water wells in Sierra Leone since we left Sierra Leone in April 2017. It is Heather's personal goal to raise enough money for 10 – 12 wells before I go back to Sierra Leone in August 2019.**

**Each hand-dug well in Sierra Leone costs \$1000 USD (approx. 7,700 Le ~ \$1 USD). The wells are dug by a small local company and I know the man who runs the company personally. Not only does this project provide clean water for communities of people to drink, but it also provides employment to local people in a country where the unemployment rate is well over 70%, and according to the 2018 UNPD the poverty rate is 77.5% (estimated).**

**We are now 9 wells closer to my lifelong commitment to give every village in SL water. Thank you to all the donors and supporters in U.S.A. who have made this vision a reality! Below, Taylor's photos of the community participating and benefitting from the Cashew Plantation Project in Sierra Leone.**



## *Water Projects in Zambia and Sierra Leone*

**One of SSAAP's beloved supporters, a professional and talented artist from Hawai'i, decided to reconfigure her birthday into water for Africa. She is always interested to help with the Water Initiatives SSAAP offers, in both Zambia and Sierra Leone.**

**If you are interested in working with Zariah, in support of SSAAP's water projects, contact her below, or through her Facebook page, mentioned below. As well, if you would like to see some of her [incredible] art, please visit her site:**

[ZariahArt.com](http://ZariahArt.com)

**You may purchase fine art prints and originals from her website, as well as contact her. Her work includes: mythological, magical, multi-cultural, multi-dimensional, mixed watermedia original paintings and fine art prints. Each and every piece is a special Blessing. She calls upon the Universal Light of Love, and allows this energy to flow into each new creation. As well, she carefully researches and writes a fascinating description for each artwork.**

\*

Aloha Heather & Gail!

Wanted to share that I started a fundraiser for SSAAP for my birthday, so hopefully some people will donate!

I started it off with my own donation, hoping others will follow my lead!

*\*\*\*Become enchanted\*\*\**



## *School Sponsorship Program in Sierra Leone*

In May 2018, SSAAP received a grant for its Sierra Leone Primary School Sponsorship! With this grant, 62 children go to school – and this can either be spaced out into two or three years, or all the children can be sponsored when we return to Sierra Leone in August 2019. The donor[s] will decide whatever they prefer.

SSAAP will provide feedback concerning the Primary School Sponsorship Program through receipts for school fees, receipts for uniforms/shoes/socks, hand-written thank you letter from the sponsored student, attendance report from the school, report card from the school, and a photo of the student in his/her school uniform.

Thank you for giving SSAAP this opportunity through your grant! Thank you for trusting in our project, in our mission, in our style of working!

\*

## *Guinea Fowl Project in Zambia*

Again, I will defer to the man who sent SSAAP is working on the guinea fowl (local bird) project in Mululwe, Ithezhi-tezhi District of Zambia, named David Kashekele.

*Before reading David's email,*

- Everyone in Zambia calls me 'Hezah'. They do not have the 'th' sound in ciTonga, our local language, and so no one can pronounce my name. (And now, thanks to them, I am also having trouble pronouncing 'th' sounds together ☹). Therefore, in 2004 when I first came to Zambia for the Peace Corps, the village named me 'Hezah'. People do not call me 'Heather'; they would have no clue who 'Heather' even is if you came asking for me in the village!
- 'Ba' is a term of respect in Zambia, like 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.' or 'Sir' or 'Madame'
- K30 is thirty Kwacha, approximately \$3 USD (approx. K9.78 ~ \$1 USD)
  - K6000 is approximately \$600 USD
- SSAAP will probably give this community 1/3 the cost of the incubator after a few years (\$200-ish) and allow the community to figure out how they are going to raise the other K4000 (\$400 USD) through their own incentives and initiatives, primarily through sales of guinea fowls once they reproduce. This is SSAAP's version of *sustainability* and *empowerment*.



*Ndalumba kapati Ba Hezah,*

*The house is already built. One guinea fowl is k30. we are only waiting for your coming that all can start. last time you mentioned the price of the incubator. the quality one is about k6000. So, when are you coming to Zambia? Zambians are missing you.*

\*

## *Apothecary Project*

**Africa as Art, Nature, Spirit and Healing:** SSAAP's Herbal Project works with the trees of both rural Zambia and Sierra Leone through an Herbalist and Apothecary from Oregon. Mary has been a source of wisdom, Light and Love in my life since my childhood and I am elated to work with her now as adults. Her practice, called *Enable Your Healing*, based out of Eugene, Oregon, works with individuals through herbal medicine, dietary technique and exercise to determine the best healing regiment for each client. *Enable Your Healing* hosts healing workshops throughout the world (upcoming workshop in Hawai'i). Please visit their website: [www.enableyourhealing.com](http://www.enableyourhealing.com).





**In December 2016, Mary expressed a desire to work with some of the local medicine men in the remote areas of rural Moyamba, Sierra Leone through SSAAP; I chose to work with a medicine man in Nyandehun Village, Sierra Leone.**

**Together, he and I collected various plants (roots, leaves, and trunks) that somehow, I managed to get back to the U.S.A.! Thank you to everyone who made that possible and who helped me. I could barely believe she and I were sitting in my father's basement in Ohio and Africa had made it home with me – through so much – in the form of trees!**



**This is Samuel Blango, the traditional healer SSAAP worked with from Nyandehun Village. He is an African medicine man, and told me ‘as much as he**

could' without revealing some of the secrets of the African bush that his elders taught him never to tell anyone who wasn't part of their circle of healers.

He is a Mende man, from the *Mende* tribe of Sierra Leone, so all of the plants are labeled in Mende, then translated into English.



The entire community surrounded us while he taught me about the plants.



And somehow, they made it from the village in Sierra Leone back to my father's house in Dayton, Ohio!





**The leaves are no longer green, but Mary insists they are better than nothing. Of course, the bark and the roots will be good for long-term use.**



**Enable Your Healing and SSAAP's sustainable goal is to work together in Africa with the medicine men – a project I began when I was in the Peace Corps (2004-2006) and have only dabbled in with SSAAP. Learning about the trees, how to use them to heal, and how to tap into their infinite healing is something I have personally always been interested in. Mary plans to visit the village in Zambia in June 2019 and together we want to help not only the medicine men we work with directly, but also their communities at-large.**

**I advised Mary that when she comes to Africa, to have a very specific intention. I told her to be very prepared for the lack of time control and laid-back attitude of the people. The people of the village tend to follow the sun (Nature-based) rather than a watch (human-based) and this is both a literal and a figurative metaphor for their mindsets. I told her to have a specific intention for what she wants to**

accomplish, and that anything she cannot get done on the first trip will just naturally roll into the second one, and that we should find a way to benefit the medicine man's whole community ~ not just him!

\*

## *Upcoming SSAAP Fundraisers*

Please feel welcome to attend any of the SSAAP Art Fundraisers in either Ohio or Colorado, U.S.A. in 2018.

### *August 2018*

- **First Friday Art Walk; Front Street Warehouse, 1001 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street; Dayton, Ohio: Friday, August 3, 2018: 5-9 p.m.**

*Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2212828812262588/?ti=icl>*

### *September 2018*

- **Art Space Market: Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>; evening-time. Cleveland, Ohio (unfixed; details pending)**
- **First Friday Art Walk; Front Street Warehouse, 1001 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street; Dayton, Ohio: Friday, September 7, 2018: 5-9 p.m.**

### *October 2018*

- **Covenant DTC; 5400 S Yosemite St, Greenwood Village, CO 80111: Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> (details to be announced)**
- **After-School Art Sale; Mountain Phoenix Community School; 4725 Miller Street; Wheat Ridge, Colorado 80033 (details to be announced)**

### *November 2018*

- **First Friday Art Walk; Wayfinder Co-Op, 525 Santa Fe Dr, Denver, CO 80204; Friday, November 2, 2018; 5-10 p.m.**
- **LexisNexis Employee Holiday Bazaar; 9433 Springboro Pike, Miamisburg, Ohio 45342; Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> (time to be announced)**
  - **World Gift Market; First Plymouth Church, 3501 South Colorado Boulevard; Englewood, Colorado 80113; Saturday, November 17, 2018: 9 am to 4 pm and Sunday, November 18, 2018: 9 am to 2 pm**

## *Culture: Our Everyday Life in Africa*

If I had to evaluate the question most commonly asked of me, without fail, it would be what our daily life looks like in Africa: what do we eat? How do we eat? What is our house like? How do we cook? How do we bathe? Where do we get food? And to be honest, I never answer the question! I am sorry for that, too; I just don't have a good reference point in which to answer the question and to give the answer justice. So allow me to attempt to answer it now...

\*

*Question #1: What is your daily life like in Africa?* So here is a brief journey into our life in Zambia... from Lusaka (capital city) to Kalomo (town nearest to our village) to Simwatachela Chiefdom (our village).



'Zam' [Zambia] as opposed to 'Zim' [Zimbabwe], the Sister Countries, are abbreviated as such by the locals. As Radiance and I are only a few years away now from our Zambian citizenship (then we will have dual citizenship: U.S.A. and Zambia), we consider ourselves locals ~ in all the best and worst ways 😊

## *Step 1: Hitchhiking out of Lusaka*

**This is something I have done since my Peace Corps days. I actually love hitchhiking; you never know who is going to pick you up and you never know what you are going to learn about the world. I can safely say that the majority of my friends in Zambia I have made hitchhiking. As well, I have met many Congolese, Zimbabweans, South Africans and Namibians this way.**



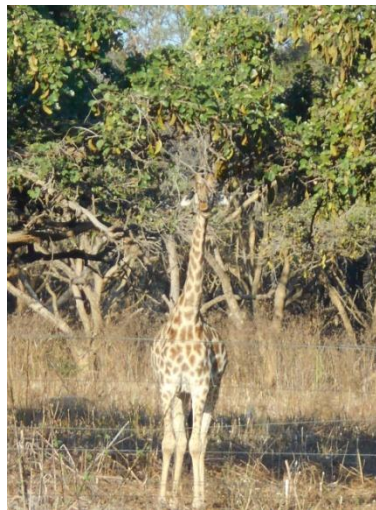
**One might suggest that as we have no vehicle, we might rather take a local bus for the 8-ish hour journey from Lusaka to Kalomo. However, most of the time we leave Lusaka after flying back into Zambia from either the U.S.A., India, or Sierra Leone, and therefore between the extensive amount of luggage and food we buy in-bulk to take back to the village, we have way too many belongings for public transportation. As well, we have also learned that we make more friends from hitchhiking than taking the public transportation.**

**Hitchhiking is also considerably cheaper than public transportation (which in Zambia is fairly expensive), and as I strive to use 75-80% of all SSAAP's funding on the project itself (rather than administrative expenses), it just seems like 'hiking' as the Zambians call it, is the way to go for SSAAP.**



**When questioned about the safety of hitchhiking, I always tell people: “Well, I get to choose who I get into the car with, don’t I?” Since my early days of hitchhiking around Zambia and Sub-Saharan Africa (2004), I have never had one problem with safety. If someone pulls over to offer us a ride, and I don’t have a good sense about him/her, I thank the person and refuse the ride.**

**If living in foreign countries whereby you barely – if at all – can understand or interpret the language everyone around you is speaking for years on end doesn’t give you a strong sense of human nature and an even better education on street-smarts, I don’t know what does.**



**The place where we usually stand beside the Kafue Road is home to some wild giraffes. They are usually grazing while we are waiting for a ride.**





**I have literally walked out to the side of the road and been offered a ride within less than five minutes; I have had other experiences where I waited on the side of the road for seven hours. It is hit-or-miss with hitchhiking. But in Africa the essence of time is different than in the States, and if you know you have to travel from point A to point B within a day, then that is the only activity of the day that day. Time has a different boundary and space in Africa than in the West.**



**Along the roadside from Lusaka to the Southern Province of Zambia (Kalomo town), we pass many street-side vendors selling a wide array of local produce.**



**You will know you are approaching Southern Province when you begin to see the 50-kg bags of maize piled on the side of the road. The Tongas, or the people of Southern Province, Zambia are the maize farmers of Zambia and provide the majority of the nation with its staple food: maize powder, boiled in hot water to create *n'shima*. The red bar with the scale attached weighs each bag of maize before it can be sold.**



**N'shima with *nkuku*, or chicken. This plate comes from a restaurant in town and is missing the *cisyu*, or the vegetable relish (usually soupy-consistency) which makes the n'shima less dry.**

## Step 2: Kalomo Town



**Even in town, after leaving Lusaka (capital city), most places do not have electricity or running water.**



**We have been friends with this policewoman in Kalomo for some years now. When we speak, although she speaks English very fluently, we always converse in ciTonga. She thinks it is so funny that I always insist on practicing my Tonga.**



**Kalomo Post Office: the highlight of every trip to town. There is nothing quite like opening our P.O. Box and finding letters stuffed inside. And there's never any junk mail! Always just letters from all the people I love, sending me photos and telling me what is happening in their lives. I have many faithful pen-pals who have helped to restore the art of writing letters, rather than relying on electronic technology: a form of communication not everyone in the world has the ability of using.**



**Write me a letter! I will always write you back 😊 It might take 3 months for me to receive your letter and another 5 months for you to receive mine, but remember what I always say about Africa: it has a different Time than the rest of the planet. Write me a letter ... it is my lifeline. The constant love and support I receive from back home keeps me motivated and strong while I am in Africa.**



**Even running errands in Zambia is fun. There is never a dull moment in Zambia ☺ Above, buying seeds for the Garden Project for SSAAP. Below, Radiance (my daughter) and I usually take our shoes to be mended/sewn. The cost to mend a hole in the sole of the shoe: 3 Kwacha ~ 30 cents. To reconnect the entire sole of the shoe back to the shoe: 5 Kwacha ~ 50 cents. Can't beat the prices in Zambia, either ☺**





**Radi always gets treated to a last lunch out in the town before we have to catch the local bus up to the village. We are regulars in one particular restaurant, and the servers tend to spoil Radi.**





**Our local market in Kalomo, Zambia. Now a farm town, Kalomo used to be Zambia's capital city in the old Rhodesian days. We come to Kalomo town (where our post box is) once every 2-3 months, depending on how quickly our food runs out at home. We come primarily for shopping, as Kalomo has limited electricity and no internet access. If we need to use internet, we go to Livingstone town (tourist capital/home of Victoria Falls).**

**You can't beat the prices of food in Africa. Ten tomatoes might cost you 2 Kwacha (20 cents); a head of cabbage the same. Five kilograms of dried beans will run you 20 Kwacha (\$2 USD) and dried fish for our cats (above): *kapenta*, is about the same cost as the dried beans. The Africans, including Radiance, love *kapenta*; I gag just from thinking about the smell of the little fish cooking.**



### *Step 3: The Long Haul Home*



**The way to Simwatachela Chiefdom is to leave Kalomo, traveling 8 km north. When you reach the turn-off, marked with signs to Kabanga Rural Health Centre, Kabanga Secondary School, and Mapatizya Mines (amethyst mine), it will be approximately 80 km to my village: Sibooli-B village. This might take anywhere from 4-7 hours, depending on the season and the condition of the road. Rain always causes the journey time to increase and the roads more treacherous.**







**The road is not paved...**



**... and is even perilous at times. In fact, it is more of a direction than a road.**



**It is usually deep night when we arrive home, and each and every time I feel very relieved and thankful to have made it back safely.**



**Radi and I sleep together in a twin-sized bed with a mosquito net covering.**



**These little girls are the children of Edina and Bees Sioni. There are ten children in the family and Bees is one of the known village drunkards. He physically abuses Edina on a frequent basis and the children are quite hungry. They bring our household water in exchange for food, soap (old hotel soap donated to SSAAP), toothpaste (courtesy of MSU-EWB) or small toys / gifts.**



**The inside of our house. The cat pictured above, Mac, is the guardian of our home. She protects it while we are away. She was given to me in 2010, when I first brought Radiance to Zambia (Radi age 7 months) to destroy the rats that had infested the house while I was in the U.S. giving birth. Mac has given birth to so many kittens I couldn't even count them all. Many have died due to disease. We currently have eleven cats. They continue to reproduce and we do not stop them from doing so; Nature responds to over-population through the death of many of these little kittens who are the weaker ones in the litter. Painful as it is to lose our kittens to disease, it is also a good lesson for both Radi and I in reminding us that we don't have the final say on anything of this earth. And we can control very, very little, in the end – if anything.**



**Our house has two rooms: a sitting room and a bedroom. The plastic barrels are our pantry and preserve dried goods, i.e. pasta and rice and beans, primarily. Our bedroom has two twin beds. Our house is probably 2-3 times larger than that of the other families living around us.**



**Inside of our house (above) featuring grass roof; kitchen (below, left) and toilet (below, right). All images on this page courtesy of Carrie Marie Collins.**





**SSAAP's Women's Sewing Workshop, Simwatachela; June 2016. Both images (top and bottom) courtesy of Carrie Marie Collins.**

\*

**Visit Carrie's website to learn more about her sewing projects:  
[www.fabrichorse.com](http://www.fabrichorse.com).**





***Laundry by Carrie Marie Collins, 2016.***



**Our bedroom has two twin beds in it; Radiance and I share one, and the other is for visitors. Also pictured is our closet: a cable cord hanging in the rafters of the ceiling that we hang clothes over. The bucket of clean laundry is also pictured.  
Image courtesy of Carrie Marie Collins.**



**If forced to pin-point one of my favorite parts of the village (it would be difficult), I would have to say it is the way that the children can make anything into a toy. They are very creative in this way. As toys are not a part of their lives, a stick, an old can, empty lotion bottles, or a tree stump (pictured above) can entertain the children for hours. As well, children of all ages play together, and the older children naturally take care of the younger children. There isn't an age hierarchy the way I have experienced among children in the U.S.A. playing together; there is more of a blend, a flow, among village children.**



**A few of our favorite young women in the village; we work with them on various projects such as the Microloan Project and the We'Moon/SSAAP Arts Initiative.**



**SSAAP's Office Hours in Simwatachela, Zambia. My mother, Gail, visited the project site from late July 2017 to early October 2017 and saw how the Office Hours were overwhelming me. I couldn't eat all day, as every time I would sit down to eat, another person would knock at my door; by the end of the day I would have a pounding headache and sometimes not even enough energy to cook for Radiance. Africans typically do not have the kinds of personal space boundaries that as an American, I was brought up to expect from people, and so this behavior is quickly draining for me. On an average Office Hours day, 20-40 people come from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. asking for help from SSAAP: school sponsorships, sewing commissions, micro-loans, seeds, water wells, assistance with agriculture, health concerns. The requests, each one legitimate and sincere, are however at times overwhelming for one person to organize and channel into an active service. Therefore, Gail hacked the Office Hours from 3 days a week to 2, and carved a lunch break out for me of 4 hours, thus helping me to organize the Office Hours into a more manageable creature, so hopefully when I return to Zambia in February 2019 I can manage this more on my own as I will be alone going back to Zambia when I return. The Microloan Program in Zambia, created by one of my best friends in the States, was the main culprit which caused the rupture of control over SSAAP Office Hours and now people are coming from all edges of the Chiefdom, as well other Chiefdoms, walking on foot for sometimes 4-5 hours for a 200 Kwacha ~ \$20 USD / loan.**

**Animal Up-Keep: SSAAP hosts a variety of animal-rearing projects for its Food and Nutrition Initiative, and this involves the everyday task of looking after the animals.**





**SSAAP's Goat Project in Zambia is bountiful, and the goats are low-maintenance. We have had a few stillborn goats, always hugely disappointing, but overall the goats generate plenty of food, milk, and income for the people and is well-worth the task of maintaining them.**



**SSAAP's Cattle Project in Zambia is successful, however much more work than the Goat Project. We currently have 3 cows (all female), 1 baby cow, and two of the three cows are pregnant. Cattle are used for plowing fields, for their milk, their meat, and for trade (income-generation). I have tried many times to milk the cow; it is quite difficult. I can't milk these cows, but the six-year old child seated beside me can, and so I humbly let her – along with all the others – help me.**

**My whole existence in Africa can be summed up in two concepts: humility and accepting help (what I call 'surrender'). I have learned most about how little I know, what little I can control, and how little means so much to people who have very, very little. So in the end, the whole lot of little translates into a lot!**



**The eleven cats are basically scavengers. They eat anything and everything, and for the months/years that we are away from our house, they learn how to survive. I leave my African parents (Gibson and Selena) with a few 50-kg bags of maize-meal (*'busu'*) to feed the cats while I am away, but I am quite certain they use it instead to feed their family. 😊**



**Eleven cats later, there is no trace (droppings, etc.) of rats or mice in my home any longer. These unwanted rodents will eat anything and everything: clothing, paper, the grass roof, food; as well they bring plenty of disease. I have an admitted rat/mice phobia; the sound or the sight of them makes me light-headed. I have had numerous encounters with snakes, however; one night, in 2012, I remember the first night I arrived back in the village after leaving U.S.A. A long slippery snake was hanging out of the plank above my bed. I just called out to my African father: "Gibson, can you come in here and get rid of this thing?" I was more annoyed with the snake than anything else, for intruding and for being there when I got back. The rats are an entirely different story 😊**



**We do vaccinate the cats regularly, and as part of our Animal-Rearing we record the dates of vaccination, as well any illness the cats encounter and have treatment medication if they get sick. We frequently put vitamins into their food when we are in Zambia.**

**Radiance always helps Gibson (my African father/her African grandfather, pictured above) vaccinate the cats. She wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up. I have encouraged her to study to be a vet and to use her skill set one day in rural Africa whereby hundreds of animals – which the people depend upon to keep their families alive – perish from treatable diseases. In all the years I have lived in Africa (Zambia and Sierra Leone), I have stumbled upon one veterinarian: *one*. It would be incredible if Radi could one day use her vet training to serve people in Africa, should she decide to be a vet or should she decide to work in Africa. In the end, she will do whatever makes her happy.**



**Harvest Time:** In the Southern Province of Zambia, the maize is harvested every year from April/May, after the rains end in April, traditionally.





**The children are helping with the harvest at the house. Culturally, children are expected to help; they don't actually have a choice. The daily household chores (i.e. washing the dishes/pots and pans, sweeping the yard, washing the family clothes, finding food for the day, trading out food for other food they need with neighbors, collecting outstanding loans within the village framework, grazing the animals (goats, sheep, cows primarily) takes precedence over attending school, hence the high illiteracy rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Zambia, the children's play is work, and so the children feel left out if not included in household chores such as looking after the cows/goats, cooking, sweeping, washing clothes, helping with the harvest, working with the plough. They are trained not to consider work as something separate than everyday living, and find the joy in simple everyday things like fetching water and making a meal.**



**Radi is expected to do the household chores, specifically the dishes, daily, and find time to do her home-school books in addition to this. She is not always thrilled about helping out around the house! And is seldom to hold back any opinions she might have on this.**



**As a book-lover, there are an excessive six bookshelves in our sitting room. Once every 2-3 weeks, we clean off the shelves to check for termites. We have had a few heavy book losses to termites; as these books are essentially Radiance's school and are my closest companions in the village, we cannot afford to lose any more books to termites.**

**Our grass-thatch roof is the best and the worst part of our house.**



**The upside of the grass roof – versus a steel sheet roof – is temperature regulation. When it is cold outside (it gets *very* cold during the Zambian winter), the grass roof naturally keeps the warmth inside the house, so that the house is warm while the outside air is cold. The inverse applies to the Zambian summer – extremely dry, desert heat – whereby the grass roof keeps the inside of the house cool.**

**The downside of the grass roof is constant maintenance, constant help I have to ask for from anyone who has received assistance from SSAAP: the roof is always payback time! And people come to help, but will come to help only if I feed them (the currency of Africa is food) and so this becomes a lot of work for me, personally.**





**Another time-drainer is maintenance on the cooking shelter, or ‘*cikuta*’ in our local language. In the village, the home as we know it is divided out into all of its parts on the compound. The house (‘hut’) is only for sleeping; upon waking, people leave their hut, they do not linger there. The kitchen is a separate structure, as is the toilet (‘*cimbuzi*’), the bathing shelter (‘*cisambelo*’). Because I have not yet cemented the kitchen structure floor due to complications with the structure itself (whereas the floor of our house is cement), there is constant work of redoing the floor in the kitchen, which I need help doing and cannot do alone (above).**



**During my mother Gail’s visit to Zambia in 2017, we decided to build a guest house for any visitors coming to help with SSAAP. The guest house is small, but will be a great asset to the project for anyone staying long-term.**





I don't eat the food in Zambia, not really. It doesn't satisfy me. I eat to fill up but I don't enjoy it; I simply do not like *n'shima*, the staple dish; my child, who grew up on this food, can honestly eat more *n'shima* than a grown African man. She claims it is her favorite food in the world. It's her comfort food.

I cook every day or every-other day in the village: beans, rice and *chipatis*, and it is easy to find in the city at one of the South African-owned superstores Indian spices and condiments and *achhar* (pickle relish). The second-largest home to Indians in the world, other than in India, is in Durban, South Africa.



I like to make vegan pancakes with flour, brown sugar, baking powder, oil, a touch of water, and boiled fruit. I am not a vegan myself, but would never waste eggs or milk on pancakes when I could be giving these nutrients to my child or to myself raw. I like to lather the pancakes with margarine (keeps for up to 9 months in the village) and syrup – very unhealthy, I know, but yummy 😊.



**This is our backyard. For me, it would be difficult to pass this up. The opportunity to be in raw Nature will always win out for me over everything else. Even if the sacrifices are heavy (and, admittedly at times, the sacrifices have been incredibly heavy), I will repeatedly choose Nature over everything else. Nature is the only thing that can hold the weight of my heart, as for me Nature is the most accessible portal on the planet back to the Divine.**



**The nights in the village give back to me everything that the day has drained me of. There is usually a breeze – even in the incredible heat – and the sound of cowbells, in the distance. Usually someone is sitting by a fire, even in the dead of night, and the celestial world winking through the brilliance of stars shining overhead is a vision that keeps me inspired and alive. Our Peace Corps training coach, who was leaving Zambia just as our intake group was arriving, told us: “You will never have as good of sleep anywhere as you have in the village. I am leaving Africa and already know what I will miss the most is the quality of sleep I had here.”**

**So in the end our world is a secret paradise; there is nothing we don't have that we need, and Mother Earth has given us more than our share of abundance. I recognize this on a daily basis as well.**

**Well now, all the well-kept secrets of the village, too, are yours! This is the inside world of the village – where we live, what we eat, the work that we do. It is romanticized on the outside, I know, but the inner fabric which composes it is far less impressive superficially – but also much deeper and more profound – than I think most people are aware of, and certainly do not have access to.**

**It is my hope that anyone wanting a taste of village life – but to be taken care of as close to American standards as possible – will give the village a try!**

**Come visit us!**

\*



Question #2: What about your child? What about her education? What about her well-being?



**My daughter's heritage: Radiance Gaia Amara Cumming is named for all parts of the world in which she exists.**

***Radi*, as I call her, is pictured above with her namesake and my best friend in Zambia: Radiance Sinan'gombe, the second-born daughter of the host family we have lived with for 14+ years alongside in Zambia.**

**'*Gaia*' is the name of the living breathing balanced earth, or the natural earth we all connect with that when tuned in with on a vibrational level, the earth that helps us to master the points and purposes of our individual existences on the planet.**

**'*Amara*', which means 'tree' or 'immortal Love' in West Africa, is her Sierra Leonean name. I love that the West Africans use the words: 'tree' and 'immortal' interchangeably. 😊 She is called 'Amara' when we are in Sierra Leone; no one in Sierra Leone knows her by any name other than 'Amara'.**

**And '*Cumming*' (no 's' on the end) is my father's clan name and Radiance's surname as well.**

**Radiance is a Krio, this is her tribe; her father is a beautiful and talented – however absent – Krio man from West Africa, educated and holding a diploma from a prestigious Art College in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He is a graphic**

**designer, professionally, but is most-passionate in painting portraits or murals. Her father's father (Radiance's grandfather) worked for the UN in Freetown, and his mother (Radiance's grandmother) was a government nurse.**



**I have now understood that Radi's home is anywhere in the world she decides it will be. As her mother, I too am her Home. The people she loves are everywhere: they don't have a specific culture or geographical location. Perhaps, like me, she has already come to see that the people of the world are essentially the same: we all need the essentials to survival, we all need to love, and we all need to be loved. Love, I have researched, is an essential factor in human survival.**





**Back to the second question I am asked most-frequently: what about Radiance? Is Radiance happy? Can she adjust? Does she like U.S.A. or Africa better; which place is her Home?**

**I believe my daughter understands – at the primal base level of her being – that every geographical location on the planet has its plethora of curses and blessings. In the U.S.A. she knows that people have personal privacy barriers that do not exist in Africa. You do not ask an American how old s/he is, or how much money s/he makes, whereby in Africa these are commonplace questions generally asked upfront, even upon meeting someone! Africans do not generally say: ‘please’ or ‘thank you’, so in the U.S.A. she knows she needs to use her manners. She cannot invade people’s personal space in the U.S. the way she might in Africa. Africans are always touching each other; Americans are generally not this way. Radi knows in America she will eat dessert after dinner; she knows her bed won’t have bedbugs in it, and she knows she will be well looked-after. She knows she will eat when she is in America. Something so basic to an American child is not a given to an African child. So Radiance knows both sides of the coin.**

**And due to this, she equalizes people and places. It is not an adjustment for her in the same way it is for me to translate between worlds, climates, food, people. She doesn’t have a reference point because she has not been raised in any one fixed space or place. One culture, or country, group of people or way of life is not ‘better’ or ‘worse’ or ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ to her more than another. She never expresses this directly; rather, she is careful not to mention things that are out of context in whatever situation she is in. She does not want to be alienated because she is different. But in every situation she *is* different. And as she grows, she will own this Truth as a strength, not a weakness.**

I do not worry about this child. I recognize where her heart lies; I know the Warrior grit she is made of. I know she is Light: powerful beyond measure. And so I worry about the practical things, where I fall short: I worry about her standardized test scores, how I will afford for her to go to University, whether or not she has enough to eat – but I don't worry about *her*. I know she is stronger than I am 😊

Happiness isn't a default; it is not something that *happens*. It is a daily project, incessant effort, something one strives for – to be made better by life rather than bitter, a wise woman once told me. I believe we all have the potential to rise to the occasion of our own joy, our own happiness. We just have to decide we are worth it, first.



I strongly feel Radiance's mixed-race blood has been an asset to her in her life. It has made her wise, and strong, and resilient. Her father is also very intelligent and so perhaps she inherited her intellect from him. I cannot name a time, place, or situation anywhere in the world in which I feel she was discriminated against because of being mixed-race. If anything, it has been to her advantage as everywhere in the world she travels, she blends in [people never know where she comes from] and people are naturally intrigued by her. The best part of my life, is this little girl. She grew my heart to an infinity I never knew before her could exist.

## *Essence of Home*



***Eldorado Canyon, Boulder, Colorado, Western U.S.A.:*** There is nothing quite as incredible as a Colorado Summer. I can't quite remember ever having so much fun here before! The older I get, the more alive I feel, the more I place value on happiness, and the more I honor myself as a unique being residing here to do very specific Love-based work. The more invigorated with passion I channel into SSAAP, and the more I realize this project, as well this life, are incredible gifts.





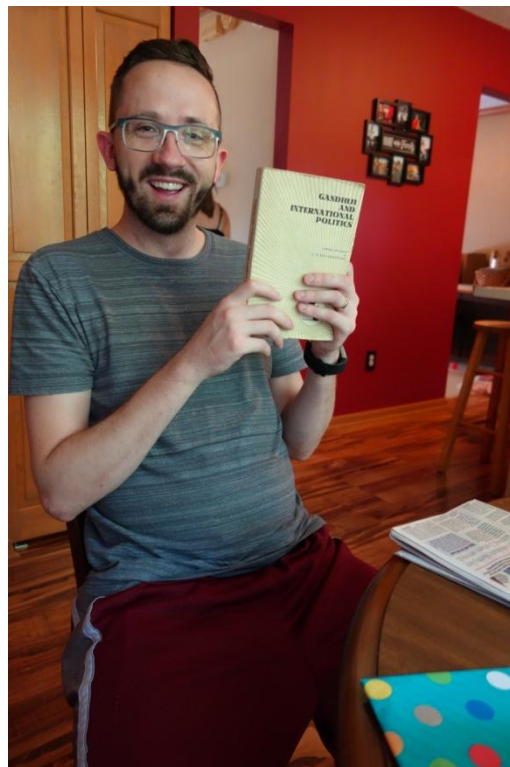
**I came back to America to have my spirit fed and saturated so that I can return again to Africa. The U.S.A. recharges my inner battery. The people closest to me: the people I never want to be without even if I have to live without, are my tribe. They are my incredible parents. My beloved family and friends in America. Thus I cherish the magical time I have spent here, every second of it, thus thank you for spending it with me...**





*“Life is a sermon; existence reveals us in its own way – but – always indirectly, and that is the beauty of it.”*

*~ Heritage Clothing Line; New Delhi, India*







**As humans, we receive this chance, this single opportunity: to breathe, to feel the weight of the air lift our lungs, embrace the adventure of being alive and just to hold on ~ it's what we came here to do.**



**America the Beautiful;**

**America *is* beautiful.**

**Thank you for giving me the world,**

**And thank you for giving me Africa.**



**Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP) is a grassroots program created by the people of rural Africa (Zambia, Sierra Leone, and potentially Ethiopia or Sudan) and committed to serving the needs of the people. SSAAP works with simple, basic everyday issues of the village people through the foundation of nonviolent activism based upon Love – not fear.**

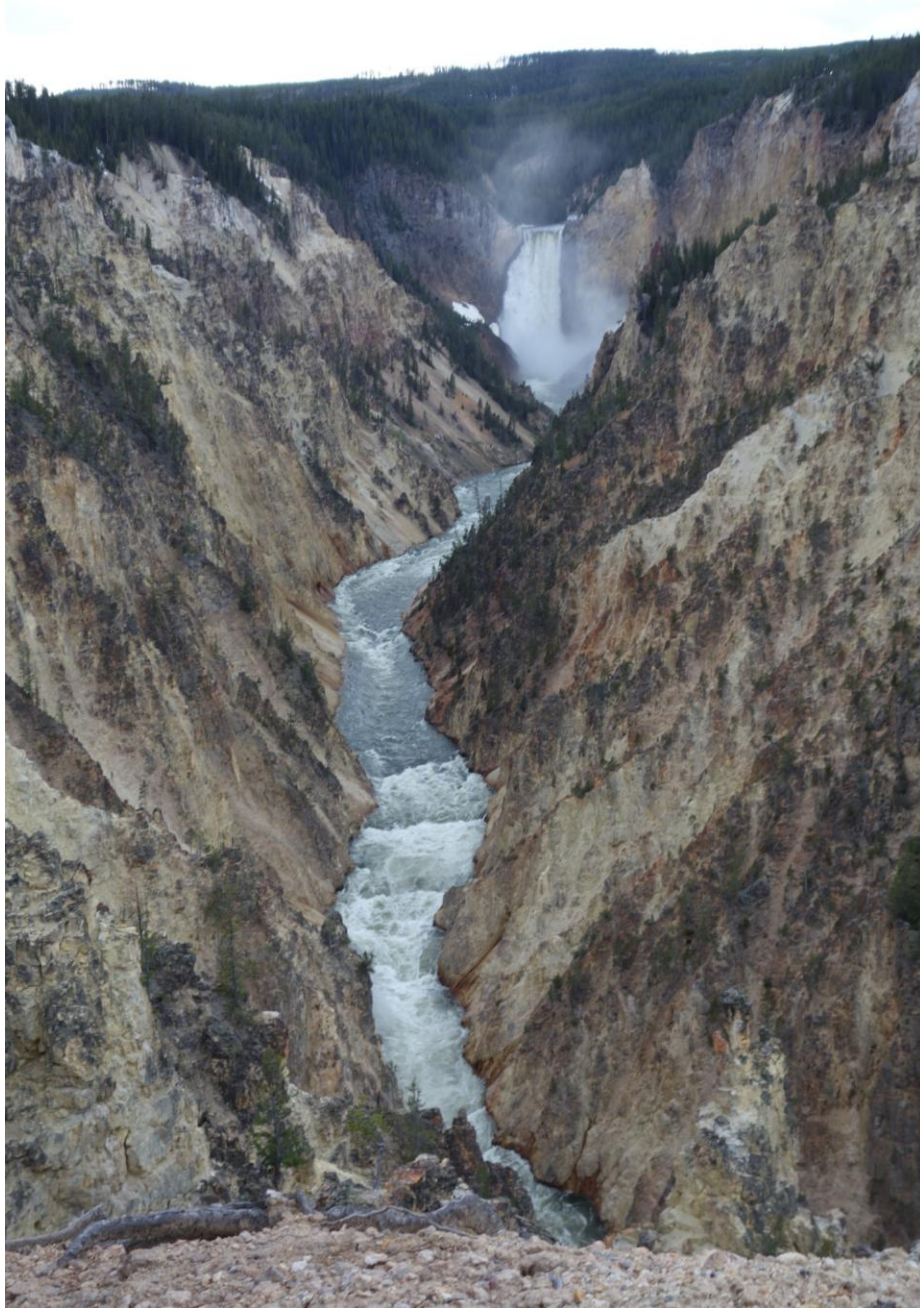
**SSAAP is a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization, Tax ID #: 27-2033029.**



**Please contact Gail or Heather if you wish to work together with SSAAP in any context, capacity or through any of our projects in Southern, Eastern, or Western Africa.**

**Come to Africa to volunteer and to work with SSAAP! Come help us make a water well, create an arts initiative with the women, improve our micro-loan program, rear animals with us. Please help us make SSAAP a better program. Come for the Africans and come for yourself; give the gift of Africa to *you!* Africa I believe to be the most healing land on the planet.**

**With Love, Heather and Radiance**



*“Unless you do something, unless you change, unless you have a different perspective to look at, to look with, unless you move in an altogether different dimension than the intellect, there is no answer.”*

*~ Osho*