

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2005

Hello Friends,

We have completed our month stay in Zimbabwe and have returned home to be with our families and friends on your side of the globe. Much has transpired during our stay, in the way of progress, in the development of relationships both business and personal, and in our soul's learning. It is impossible to open one's heart and mind, reaching out to extend oneself into another's world, without everyone being touched by this simple process.

We all have been moved to tears more than once and I can just say that we appreciate your part in giving us the help to pass on. Your intent to bring assistance to the people of Zimbabwe has been heard, felt and is in no way taken lightly. We are stronger women for having spent this month exploring all the alternatives possible to gain ground, and hopefully too, we have left our friends and family on the soil there, also stronger for being involved.

Help is absolutely a two way relationship and it can never be extended from only one side, no matter how well the intention, how large the injustices requiring balance, and how many hopes and dreams are hinged upon it. Assistance must first be requested with an awareness and priority of the need, then taken completely out of our hands and worn as if it is clothing, and integrated into the social structure, the ongoing evolution of humanity, and the indigenous way of life. Only then will there be success of the nature we need.

#### EXPANSION into DEWEDZO

The wheels keep turning to bring help to more people and other regions. Our efforts in the Mujuru's area brought much satisfaction. Fradreck and Fungai were very organized in facilitating our journey to their rural home. We were all grateful to get so much done in such a short time. Our hosts had laid a good foundation and provided the needed follow-up so that we were able to come and go in two days, completing much of the initial framework needed for the future.

Our main goals were:

- a. To identify those poorer children, whose families are unable to pay school fees,
- b. To clarify what various roles need to be played to facilitate their school sponsorship,
- c. To begin the interviews with all residents in these 3 villages to understand the big picture of the area.

The survey includes pertinent information about each family, whether they have a toilet and well, whether inclement weather has destroyed their home, toilet, or well, what kind of medical need exists in the family, whether they are a single head of household or a parent-less home being managed by an elder teen child, how many children are school age and what grades are they attending, as well as counting infants. This is the same type of survey we have continually updated for Nhimbe since my first trip in March 2000. My

intention has always been to be ready with the information needed when the appropriate aid arrives on our doorstep.

We spent one day going to Rusape to visit the chief of the area, Chief Makoni, who is responsible for the largest number of villages in Zimbabwe. This translates into the most kilometers to travel to communicate with all of the villages in his region. With the fuel shortage, everyone is feeling the effects. In their case, they haven't been able to travel to the villages to properly implement programs that are needed for survival. It also makes it very difficult to plan and hold effective meetings with the headmen and village heads who are having serious transport problems as well.

Fungai was instrumental in developing the basics for an assistance program with traditional roots that has now been adopted all over Zimbabwe. The purpose of the program is to take care of those less fortunate by raising food on a special plot of land which can be tended and harvested for the families, the elderly, and orphans, who really need the help. Those villages close to their own area have implemented this successful program but there is training needed to really teach the principles to all the headmen and village heads. The fuel shortage is putting a dent in their efforts. Long back, this kind of program was done at the Chief's locale but their new idea is that it's managed at the village level so that the food is closer to the people needing to receive it.

So Chief Makoni was a very friendly and appreciative man. He gave us advice, thanked us and gave us a letter of introduction to carry with us as we go about the work. Fradreck made multiple copies and gave them to all the liaison officers for each of the three village heads, as well as each of us to have available for future reference.

Chief Makoni's advice to us was to be recognized as a club. This was profound! I'm not sure if all of you realize the implications of being an "organization" in Zimbabwe at this time, but simply put, a majority of the non-government organizations (NGOs) have left the country due to various pressures.

Ancient Ways is not an "organization" in Zimbabwe as in the states, but we instead are just "friends" from the other side of the planet without religious or political bias. We have always maintained an educational focus in the states, studying traditional ways of music and healing, that has extended itself into humanitarian work abroad. There is another such "club" operating in Chief Makoni's jurisdiction. The club is recognized by the political structure, operates independently (of the donors and the government intervention) and the donors visit to see how things are going. Sounds like what we are doing! So we were very happy to meet the Chief and get this great insight into how to perceive our work.

That first day we proceeded to Dewedzo which is area where the Mujuru's live. It is a beautiful area with mountains, many huge boulders and trees. The family there was extremely supportive of getting things rolling. Our second day was spent in meetings with the three local schools (two primaries and one secondary), the liaison officers from

the 3 villages, the councilor who is the other appropriate link to the political structure (in addition to the Chief), and the 21 sponsored school children.

We embarked on this journey with a plan to raise the funds to sponsor these children for 2006. At this point Ancient Ways has no money, which has been donated on their behalf, and so we are hopeful that your interest in this project will show itself over the next month or two, and we will be able to send these deserving kids to school. We were able to take pictures and get letters from them and are looking forward to your response to these efforts!

The project's name, chosen by the local people there, is centered upon the word *Jangano* which is an old fashioned Shona word referring to helping each other. Often people will work in one person's field, weeding for example, and then move on to do the next person's field. The word carries the underlying meaning of reciprocity. Besides these rural people working together, its those of us in North America who are also, out of a feeling of reciprocity, wanting to give something back to Zimbabwe for their beautiful rich music which we continue to share in and learn, and so this project gives us the ability to participate in *Jangano* on our side of the planet as well.

Fradreck has often explained that it's his rural roots and ancestral heritage that has brought him prosperity. He has been looking for ways to help the poorer people in his villages and often pays school fees for children, brings them clothes from his trips, and generally supports those less fortunate. Cosmas tell similar stories, with experiences over several years like bread crumbs, leading to how we began Nhimbe for Progress 6 years ago. How can one truly succeed without passing on some of their good fortune? These men have struggled with that question.

Their success as musicians initially stimulated everything for their family but over time has not moved them into radically different financial brackets, but has definitely brought gradual support. They have managed to develop their homesteads. They are able to afford a car which is a special thing in Zimbabwe and gives much power, independence, and ability to transport both people and goods to and from the rural area as it is one of the infrastructure keys. It has afforded them the ability to pay school fees for their children, keep them fed so they can continue with normal healthy growth mentally and physically, and help their extended families, which are of course, large.

This trip we were introduced to Fradreck's children who have been enormously helpful. One of them, Simba, is in technical training using computers and so has been able to get involved in some of the needed record keeping right off the bat. Simba was able to work for Nhimbe for Progress this trip since others who worked for us in the past have left the country for college opportunities. His other son, Wilson, is very interested in photography and so may be able to help with photos in the future. They are both computer literate and able to send excel worksheets and photos to us across the globe. What good and helpful things the internet can bring!

DOCUMENTARY

We shared the Nhimbe documentary that Dana and Molly filmed at the beginning of 2004, with around 140 Nhimbe participants, plus another 30 or so people in Rusape at the Chief's court. The DVD on a laptop works wonders. Everyone continues to be so excited by it. The Nhimbe folks are "getting it", seeing the vision, that we are serious, that we expect success. Others from the outside also see the potential and recognize that this isn't casual.

Thanks Dana and Molly (see [skysthelimitcreative.com](http://skysthelimitcreative.com)) for following your hearts and inspiring the train to take that track. It speaks so loudly for what we believe in, that it keeps adding fuel to the engine, offering a helping hand over and over again, every time it is played. We have been sending out the DVD with any donation of over \$200 as a huge thank you if people haven't already received one. The DVD or video form continues to be available for any donation if you have an opportunity to share it with your "village" – those in your immediate community who might be interested in this special link to a unique rural region in Africa and the help being offered there by Ancient Ways.

#### TEAM WORK

There are so many people who are involved that make our success possible. Our team in Mhondoro who continually fuels the Nhimbe train really deserved some extra recognition this time so we made a plan. Cosmas and I discussed a proposition of offering the people an incentive to keep up the good work but without the additional overhead for me to raise more money each month for salaries. I start worrying when the monthly budget for wages starts tipping the scale because we are simply funded by donations such as yours. Well as it turned out, I did end up recommending a small increase to bring things into better balance but also wanted to reward their longstanding efforts. An important part of the effect of the wages is that each of these people has extended families that are then also benefiting from what they receive.

So we dedicated some funds to purchase a female *mombe* (oxen) or goats for each staff member based upon their job. I spent the month trying to locate some *mombe* to purchase and it wasn't actualized before leaving. I am certain with a little more looking they will find them. We located only 4 of them each at \$Z10 million and they will be sourcing the rest soon as well as some goats. Everyone is very happy with the bonus.

Zimbabwe has its growing network, to include our accountant, the private secondary girls school teacher who is gathering books for our library and spreading the word, this month's landlord who sourced our petrol almost daily and gave us relief with her continual moral support and home pleasantries, our Moslem friend who carries a big heart for people and shares his unique connections with us, along with others. And we in North America also have our network. Here are many thanks to all of those who have felt drawn to be involved!

For instance, Rosalie Brown-Lundh from Portland was in Harare in the late spring and visited the Nhimbe for Progress Community Center, taking lessons during her stay from both Cosmas and Fradreck. Out of deep appreciation for what was taking place within the Nhimbe villages, and the potentiality for what could be done elsewhere, she found

herself talking with Fradreck about his desire to find ways to bring to his rural home some of the benefits he has enjoyed from working with the music abroad. Without her willingness to become a soldier in this army of sorts helping with the frontline work, I would have been stretched beyond belief to imagine taking on an entire new area alone.

Rosalie's enthusiasm to be this special link was a key for me to take on this additional area. Many of you know that Ancient Ways has no budget for wages or staff and so volunteerism, focused group effort and teamwork are the grand keys to our success. I certainly am not capable of all of the work needing done, but many hands make light work. And until we allocate funds for office staff all the bits and pieces taken on by any of you are the main way we are able to continue.

Additionally, a new volunteer, Andrea Olson from Eugene has begun to study and oversee the school sponsorship management. This is a very detailed program with so many variables, many time oriented tasks, and a wonderful connection to the children of Africa. She has her own personal family reasons for feeling a bond to Zimbabwe, and her own history for being related to work overseas, but for her to find her heart in union with Ancient Ways' efforts is a profound thing with its own organic life form being revealed.

There are incredible home-fires burning when we are gone and so it's many of you carrying a torch for Zimbabwe that keeps me feeling that we will overcome. The Ancient Ways network that handles the Field Reports, the financial records, the children and family record keeping, the sculpture inventories, running the office, and website development, are all key players in this game that is affecting the quality of life, as well as how the people in rural Zimbabwe will survive and hopefully eventually thrive. I want to win this game! I want results that move mountains! I want success that benefits everyone involved! (I sound like an ill-tempered willful child with unrecognizable origins – who is that person? Awfully demanding it seems...my kindergarten teacher might remember me.)

I need to also thank all of you who are connected to groups and have taken on fundraising of various sorts. The Sundborn Children's House (the preschool behind our preschool), Kutsinhira, those of you in bands, and other individuals that have created group efforts with your own families, are all a powerful influence on our program's development. Without your interest and heart felt desire to affect the rural people's lives, we would not have much hope. *Tatenda Chievzo!*

## HEALTH CARE

The Health Program that we are able to sustain in Mhondoro is minimal. My heart continues to desire more obvious energy to flow in this direction. It doesn't do much good to help someone who isn't alive. Due to the complexities of life there, and how we work amongst the government systems, we are not able to provide standard western medicine. Our Health Station has visiting days of Tuesday and Saturday for a couple of hours. The kind of help offered is simply pain killers, eye allergy drops or Tums, cleaning of wounds, and advice on how to deal with the malady, be it simple instructions

about hygiene, advice to get to the nearest clinic, or words of encouragement towards lifestyle changes and healing.

While in the villages Helen and I were able to offer some alternative health care. I continue to feel that these are the easiest and most efficient methods. I am particularly pleased with NMT (see [www.nmt.md](http://www.nmt.md)) because a session or two will usually bring change in the condition, and change in an ongoing illness brings hope, which then fuels more change. From the standard medical model for instance, they talk about using a pain killer or anti-diarrhea medicine to break the cycle and then the body can continue to repair itself. Sometimes it just takes breaking the cycle. NMT does that very effectively.

I realize that most people “making it” in the alternative health field today are not in a position to travel around the world, leaving a practice that they are just developing, to live under rather difficult circumstances themselves helping someone who lives in the African bush, but I again want to put that word out...we need practitioners in our villages able to come even if just for a couple of weeks, lend a helping hand, and provide some basic relief. Everyone deserves relief from illness.

The NMT way, as an intentional modality, requires no tools other than a focused mind and heart. The people’s struggle to survive the hard life is dealing them is not going to change quickly, but by offering a small amount of relief and hope, a shift is imminent. We may see the results of our efforts in their lives only in the next generation in a dramatic way. And then too, when we extend ourselves into another’s life, we change our own forever.

## HEALTH WORKSHOPS

We managed to reach the 6 villages with the Health Workshop that were initially developed last April. I always learn many things while offering the workshop. Parts of it are delivered in a question and answer format and so that new information is often able to be included since it increases the knowledge base from which we are working. I am being translated and assisted all along the way. Each village provides space, calling their residents to attend, and brings a bucket of water and cup for the hand washing section. We use the fluorescent lotion and a black light which is used all over the world to demonstrate how germs are invisible, hide in the little places, and how the use of soap aids in their removal. This time Helen, as a trained hospital nurse, was able to demonstrate the way she has been trained to wash and we all learned something! She always got a round of applause.

The Health Workshop format seems to be quite well received. I’m very excited by the prospect of training people to go into villages all over Zimbabwe and pass on these simple health practices. So many people have been so grateful and actually have taken and integrated the knowledge. You know, you always wonder if a student will take the new information and go forward with it. But in most cases, people are really listening.

The entire focus is providing information that can affect their health through basic personal choices. I’m quite straight with them about everything, play no games with

euphemisms and the like, and of course, they can see people are dying all around them, and so have an open ear. There are many topics that people in North America don't realize, or know but don't practice, and so this workshop could also be shared there as well. In the states of course we are bombarded by information, and in Zimbabwe there is a definite deficit of data being passed on accurately.

### MUSIC

- The Shona culture is rich with music and they vibrate music from their very bones so why mention this in our Health Workshop? This topic is a reminder of the power of sound.
- I share about science and sound vibrating our cells and about OM from another part of the world. I remind them that it doesn't matter what songs you like whether the traditional mbira, the contemporary songs from the radio, or religious songs, just remember to use music you love to uplift your spirits, and heal your body.
- I tell a story about my sister who helps us during our stay and she is singing as she is carrying water, cleaning, and cooking. Her singing not only is increasing her health, but also our own because we feel her happiness, and the sound vibrates right into the food and our meal even is brought to new levels of sensuality. They laugh. But I am so serious.
- The power of sound is so underestimated, and when we are stressed out our bodies need all the help we can get from positive thought which sounds produce!

### WATER

- The effect of water and cleansing is so obvious when we look at a dirty dish, our clothes, or even our bodies. But we discuss the idea that we can see these things need cleaning with our eyes, but we can't see the inside of our bodies and so it doesn't occur to us that we must wash with water inside too. I explain that we are sort of cleaning our blood when we drink water.
- We discuss how much water we use to wash the outside of the body and they can see the importance of the larger quantity (2 liter bottle) for drinking on a normal day – you wouldn't try and wash with one cup for instance, or water a large tree with a teaspoon.
- We also talk about the ways our bodies lose water (sweat, tears, and loss of other body fluids like urine, vomiting, or diarrhea) so when its really hot, we are crying a lot, or we are losing water from beer drinking or illness, we have to drink even more water to replenish. They all mention getting headaches at funerals, where they are crying for hours.
- We think about the obvious of using nice clean water to wash our things and talk about how to purify water if one's well isn't clean or if one drinks city water (i.e. boiling). We talk about a solar cooking unit that I would like to bring for quickly sanitizing water, but understand that people have not been interested because it is used outside and the tradition of poisoning your neighbor causes a bit of fear. It's almost the time to introduce the solar cooking kit...I've been waiting for change and we may have broken through. They are very serious when we talk about these traditions.

### DIET

- Eating so often is done to make us feel full. Particularly when there is so little to eat – there is that sense of “just do something to make that feeling in my belly go away”. So this is a reminder to eat for health and body building. They already know some of these ideas, but some are new.

- I explain about “ph” and their crops; some know about acid and alkaline soils and changing the soil ph with inputs such as wood ash. So we think about the idea that our body has ph, the inputs we feed the body changes ph, and when ph is higher or alkaline, we can not get ill. With a blackboard, we explore what they have eaten over the last day to see where the foods fall in ph-producing properties. The idea is to make it so visual that they really see that fruits and vegetables increase the ph and tea, sugar, milk, eggs, meat, *sadza* (maize), *dovi* (peanut butter), etc. are all ph lowering foods. Even the toxins that our bodies produce to work daily are low in ph and so the water drinking topic makes even more sense.

- We also discover all the foods that are direct from the field that God gives without us having to cultivate. Traditionally they know about these foods but many have forgotten or neglected to use them. But they are like medicine because they are the herbs and foods which are natural to the area and give us the ability to graze like the cattle do, being fed even when there is no crop in the garden or ox-plowed field. All of these foods have high ph effects (except the mice and crickets I would guess) and there is an enormous variety.

- I talk about food preparation being a family partnership and if the fellows don’t request more fruits and vegetables, the gals won’t be very encouraged to prepare them and that when they find the wild plants along their walk in the fields, to bring them home for dinner.

- I remind the women how much power they really have (even though it doesn’t always feel like it) to affect the health of the family. I jokingly tell them that if their men don’t want the fruits and vegetables and only want the *sadza* and meat, to let them kill themselves, but that they should be preparing food with themselves, the elderly and the children in mind. They laugh and understand what I’m saying.

- I touch on covering foods so that flies can’t have access (since where else do you see flies?) as well as explain that some foods can’t tolerate storage at room temperature. They relate that sometimes they get a “running stomach” and don’t know why.

#### PASSING DISEASE

- We discuss the various ways to give away disease to each other and help everyone think about this topic (blood & sex, food & water, air, and hands). It is said that about 70% of disease is passed with hands and so with a list of these above items, I list 10 things and write hands 7 times and they get it.

- So we talk about being responsible for passing on illness to one another, particularly when you are ill, or in the role of preparing food for others. Traditionally, if your hands are dirty, you extend your wrist for the handshake. I tell them they might consider extending their wrist if they know another person’s hands are not clean, for instance, you can see they are sneezing and coughing and have the flu. They laugh. I demonstrate this in multiple ways and times throughout this section, coughing into my hand and then offering my hand to shake. The way you and I enter a room and with our eyes give a friendly glance to the people there, in their culture they physically go to each person and

shake their hand, and so it is so automatic and natural, it's hard to think about whether they just saw that person hacking away.

- The hand washing with the fluorescent lotion is such a great tool. We all can see how well we wash, or don't and that soap really helps!

### POISONS

- Some of the best news came when we talked about the immune system and how we can get disease even it hasn't been passed with our hands, food, water, air, sex or blood.

When we came to discussing poisons, I was using my standard talk about the protective questions to ask when you use products with labels, and we got some answers (by the way, thanks to all of you who did some research and sent me your results on Shumba Super – much appreciated!):

- Ask, did God made the thing or did man?
- And, ask did one's grandparents use this item? If not, then think twice.

- We found out that their grandparents did not use Shumba but instead used wood ashes. Well, that is great news! From raising chickens I was able to contribute that wood ashes is the way we would keep bugs off the chickens – we would make a dusting box for them and they would love to hang out there dusting themselves and in the process smothering the bugs. So maybe that is how it works with the grain. But to top it off, Charles (our financial manager, spiritual counselor and tutor) found out that the ashes from dry maize cobs creates a rather sour ash and so creates a deterrent from that standpoint as well, and was the preferred method. I am so grateful for this possible replacement to protect their grain!

- So we asked if there were any people interested in testing the idea. In each workshop there were. I explained that I didn't want them trying this on their entire crop, but try doing a controlled test. Using a small amount of maize and some ash, test different batches with smaller and larger doses of the ash; this way we could come up with a recommendation for the future. Any test failures can be used for the chickens.

- Everyone was very interested in this section as it was a previously unexplored topic. Everyone has been using the Shumba as well as other chemicals without thought of any danger. I asked what the minimum number of days from treatment to use was, and got a wide variety of answers. Many now knew to use gloves or plastic bags and a bandana since we discussed it last April (not one person knew this before).

- As I looked at the label I realized it was all in English. I asked how many people could read English and very few could. I asked how they could read about the dangers, and first of course they didn't realize there might be dangers, and then they said they would ask a neighbor what they thought, but then when we demonstrated the variety of answers from the discussion on the minimum number of days to wait before using, it was obvious to them that they couldn't count on the friend method. They also suggested asking a child to read the label since they are learning English in school.

I am so outraged by the demonstrated lack of responsibility on the manufacturer's part that I can't even speak. It's not the only thing I can't put words to because I am so appalled but it is one of the highest on the list. The idea that the company doesn't include some warning in Shona and Ndebele at least is like not explaining that there is a bullet in

the gun. Granted mainstream food production is using the product, but with the warnings understood. This just hits me in my gut.

I feel like screaming and crying and carrying on...I am absolutely indignant about the whole thing. I realize that not everyone places as much importance on organic and prevention of disease through choice as I'm impelled to do, but really, are not most of us on to this? In the 50's and 60's there was far less consciousness about such things, but I'm not over reacting am I?

I feel so powerless against the corporate machine since my time is already overly devoted and my path is to educate for change from the front lines. But maybe there is someone, or a non-profit with that focus, who is interested in writing the company, and making efforts to stop this inexcusable lack of respect for human life. Maybe the importer could paste some extra info on the bottle if that is the case.

One day does not pass in Zimbabwe that you don't hear of someone attending a funeral. It is your own family and friends, the next village, or someone who isn't at work. Our 5<sup>th</sup> workshop was cancelled due to a funeral in the village so they came to a following one. I don't believe it is only HIV. There are so many factors, like the ingestion of poison, that affect the immune system, which are an integral part of daily life. These factors must be looked at and changes made. If we add malnutrition to the list, partly due to drought but partly due to lack of education about diet and permaculture, and address that as well then we will have tackled a couple of the legs of the beast.

Thanks for hearing me. I can't carry this heart ache alone. You need to help me by giving me your ear. Just listening is a tremendous help! I feel that a share of the grief that ends up overflowing my cup can be spread out over a wider basin and my load can be lightened just by trying to put words to it. Allowing full vent to my urges of expression will not happen in this writing today, nor will it seep out gradually over the next couple of weeks and satisfy the cravings to share, but it is something deeper that has shaken my foundations and is rumbling like loud thunder from underground. How can we stand by and not do something? And yet, what can we do? This is huge and complex and something that is slicing through the random experiences of hearing about trauma, and instead is being served for breakfast daily. If you have no appetite for this I don't blame you.

#### REST & RELAXATION

- This topic is more important than we think. Everyone worries but sometimes we worry too much. Really resting at night might take self-disciplined effort if one has many problems.

- I suggest that they try going to bed and imagine that the Creator's hands are holding them, and they sink down into the bed as if they are a child being held by their loving parent.

- Or when sitting under a tree doing nothing, chewing a piece of grass, are you really relaxing doing nothing or is your mind turning on and on? I remind them of the movie we all are watching in our brain and how we are talking to ourselves all the time. I tell

them that my own movie is quite boring and worrisome and if I don't silence it, then I can't relax.

### PRAYER

- I wrap up the workshop discussing a bit about prayer. My desire here is to emphasize that it doesn't matter what one's religious orientation, whether we pray with mbira, through church prayers we have been given, or if we make up our own.

- Just pray. I explain that we are all children of God and the most important thing is that we cultivate that relationship. By using an old friend who is now translating for me, I explain that we wouldn't continue to be good friends if I turned my back to him and quick talking or listening.

- We talk about what we say when we talk to God – we ask for things, hopefully wait for a reply, and we thank for things as well. If our minds are talking too much, we might not hear the answer if it comes as a small voice, so we need silence. If I ask for something but never get to the gratitude and appreciation part of the thing, then I will keep feeling needy and empty, always in the asking mode.

-I don't mind talking about these subjects – its second nature for me to rattle on about everything in which I'm interested – and I want to share all of my love for my family and friends, not just a little. For me, prayer is my only way to stay connected to the Source of creation, with a goal to be in constant prayer, in one mode or another.

### WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Hopefully these details of the workshops are interesting to you. I am fascinated by how to explain things in such a way that someone can understand me. Offering the workshops, where I am a non-Shona speaking individual, and am coming from a quite different culture, give me a good chance to practice my skills of analyzing the best ways to talk about a subject and get inside their mind and heart.

I believe these topics are a lifeline or I wouldn't spend my time, as it's always limited. I would only wish for more time. We covered HIV/AIDS in our workshop but in a limited fashion. Last year we focused much energy getting that topic off the ground and into conversation – it had been buried in dark places. This year we have been looking at general public health issues. Next year is on the drawing board...

### ABUNDANCE

There is a strange psychological effect that cuts through memories of previous positive experiences, when you repeatedly haven't got something you are used to, and replaces them with lack. Pretty soon, one can start believing that whatever "it" is doesn't exist and is impossible to find. But then just when you have given up hope, there it might show up. The lessons of poverty are great. How long can a person keep having faith, and dream up a new life when their beliefs are being thwarted by all experiences around them, their hopes being shattered by loss, and their souls being challenged by a myriad of forces?

Our own ghettos carry much information on transformation from which to learn...I keep working on my own limitations in this regard and trying to see past the physical

manifestation of what is in front of me to cultivate a heart and mind that can vision a new terrain for my life force to be growing.

Counseling of this nature seems like an important avenue to explore. It's the same as my grandmother's generation of "The Power of Positive Thinking", or the same as "new" thought coming into the mainstream, but really "getting it" from a place that one can teach or counsel with it, is another thing. Simply having "right thought" can help people survive and overcome even when the economy they are living in is deteriorating, their families and friends are dying, and the country's chaos is creating seemingly insurmountable stressors. Victim mentality can destroy the best of us.

### GREED

I found a characteristic in myself that I might not have seen before, when I was hearing about the exchange rates going to 90,000 and we were not getting that amount ourselves. I found a thread of greed coming to the surface. Normally I wouldn't think of myself in that way, and maybe the opposite, because I always extend myself through sharing whatever I have been given, as I know it helps me feel larger, instead of so miniscule as I did as a child.

But sure enough, as I watched my own "movie" and saw reflections of greed in others (whites on the take from aid organizations, fear of theft always pushing the edges so that one padlocks everything all the time, seeing jealousy because of what someone doesn't have), I finally "got it" and realized that the movie was really me too. It's my filter through which I was seeing.

Granted, I wanted those extra bucks for a good cause (my sense that our Nhimbe child is always in need), but the reality is that, it is that greed that pushes the exchange higher and higher. It's those with the foreign dollars that keep asking for more and getting it and then there you have it, a spiraling economy into hyperinflation beyond one's wildest imagination - prices going up from one day to the next. So I could be part of the problem, if I got all that I wanted. It has been a wonderfully eye-opening trip to Zimbabwe – helping me to see greed, which is a quality that is not attractive to my God no matter what my excuse.

### HUMILITY

There is still a couple of experiences that haunt me; a couple of things that won't go away. Maybe if I share with you, they will at least soften, and not keep being a shadowy fringe character pursuing my silent moments. The first was when one of our staff, whom I have known for a long time, sat quietly and explained that her children were being told to leave school because she couldn't afford a school exercise book for them. She isn't paid much for her work, as is the case for most everyone, but it never occurred to me that the economy and prices had become so horrendous that she couldn't buy the tablet needed (\$Z13,000 or so).

It wasn't so much *that* she told me, but *how* she told me. She is a religious woman, honest to the core, attending regular services and always full of kindness and a smile for

anyone on her path. As she was telling me of this situation, she kept bowing her head, lower and lower. It was horrible. I wanted to scream “don’t do that, please don’t do that...Lower your head like that to your God, but not me, no, not to me”.

Besides her dilemma sinking into my preconceived notions about how things are this time, I also realized how difficult this role is for me, and I imagine anyone else too. We play God in a way, by making decisions on who gets what, how much, and when. I don’t like it. But the reality is, God is using us, and we are the hand of God extending out from each of your hearts, and we must be accountable for that, carefully touching people’s lives, not getting overly sentimental one time or another, but not being calloused either.

## HUNGER

The second experience is now so deeply under my skin that I doubt if it will ever really evaporate. It was the results of one middle-of-the-night wake up call. This particular night we had been preparing for a ceremony for the following day, throughout the day. I didn’t realize it was being considered a ceremony, but we were just interested in doing something for the immediate community before we left. After all, we had been in Zimbabwe one month and hadn’t really heard any music (save for our CDs of Anzanga and Tuku) - we could have been in Uganda or Tanzania for all we knew. I wanted to make sure that Helen *knew* that she was in Zimbabwe.

We had taken a couple of dollars out of our food budget and bought 3 chickens and some beef. We had remaining rice and vegetables from our pantry. We had some maize ground for the event. We had purchased the supplies so that mom was brewing some beverage for the following evening in a traditional way over a fire outside, and we had been sharing that space with her. Around midnight, the dogs began barking, the wind blowing, and I wondered how Helen was doing in the next hut, since I have experienced those noises before, and they can get eerie. Next day I found out that she thought that someone knocked on her door and was wondering if something was hustling and bustling about outside.

My sleep was also interrupted as I woke up with an incredible hunger ache in my stomach. I could only cry as this was a strange yearning for food I couldn’t make go away. I had never in my life felt any real hunger before, except maybe as an infant? I knew the name of the feeling as a deep craving hunger but where did that come from? I had eaten a nice meal the previous dinner and couldn’t imagine, but felt sure that it was a gift.

The visitor at Helen’s door also visited me, and helped me to know the people in new way. I often dream heavily and am given much information and advice on how to carry out my life, how to understand things, almost as if maybe the waking world is asleep and my sleeping world is awake. It feels like this wake-up call was a piece to savor, and yet, in another way, I don’t want to think about it - it saddens me, I don’t want to feel it - its uncomfortable, I don’t want it to keep prying on the edges of my mind. We are to help but we are also to be realistic about what the best help is to offer. I keep praying for

insight on this one. Compassion is one thing and knowledge to act upon that compassion is another. I don't have the answers.

#### FOOD HELP and PRESCHOOL

We are continuing to look into being able to get the food to provide the Nhimbe villages. At \$1 USD per person, and an increase of about 45 families coming into our villages due to the Tsunami "clean up", we are stretched to our max. Food availability is limited, even if you have money to spend. The Nhimbe team in Mhondoro is ready to distribute the food to the village heads, but we first have to get it there.

My hope is that this will come together with little problem, but I do have concerns because I have now left and it's always a delicate situation to manage from abroad. Often things have a hard time coming together when I am not there to push forward. It's almost like it's a ferocious tenacity of spirit that keeps me rowing upstream even when the boat is being bounced against the rocks, unrelenting torrents of water are being inhaled, slapping us about, and the roar of the current is deafening. This must be something that I learned from the freedom of growing up here in America. We do have our problems but there is nothing like freedom to empower one's mind.

The preschool is doing great! The teachers are working a full day, splitting the children into 2 groups. The children's meal is a priority and I am so grateful that we have this system working so that they are being fed. The children are so happy and love going to their Nhimbe preschool! Thank you for that!

#### TOILETS and WELLS

When we arrived, I was asked if we would provide a micro-loan to Febby, our preschool teacher, and Takesure, our Educational Program Manager. We figured that since they have a regular job they could reduce their monthly take-home a bit and have it applied to the loan. The kind of loan ends up being without interest, but regulated on our books as if it's a USD transaction, since that is more stable.

One wanted a toilet and one wanted a well. We have researched prices and labor costs. The well looks like the easiest thing to accomplish. They received some bids on the job and are planning to go forward. This will provide not only clean drinking water but empowerment to grow more fruits and vegetables as they have had to get water from quite a distance a way and it has made it impossible to grow much.

The toilet costs on the other hand were quite a surprise and that is now on hold. We found and bought the cement, and had gotten estimates for the rest of the items which was in excess of \$300 without including the labor charges or the \$55 worth of cement. Normally we expect about \$200 for the cost of a toilet, so we were in disbelief. I'm not sure what we can do at the moment. We also had committed to helping the Matarutse School build a toilet for the children. We'll have to see how that unfolds.

#### FUNDRAISING

As many of you know, we ask for help for our following year each fall. Over the last couple of months, there have been many US tragedies with the hurricanes, and I know that many of you are responding to those needs for help, as well as other parts of the globe. We are hoping that you are reserving space in your budget for Zimbabwe too as your continued support is what keeps things moving.

I'll be sending a letter to you to share our accomplishments and plans for next year. You'll have a chance to continue sponsorship of your child, or donate towards any of the Nhimbe projects you like, as well as consider supporting Jangano in the Mujuru area or the Omay Project Nutrition Garden for Schools (see Field Reports from April/May '05). In any case, be thinking about how you would like to support Ancient Ways efforts in Zimbabwe and at the home office in the next couple of months!

Additionally, many of you have seen the exquisite serpentine sculpture that we have for sale at Zimfest or smaller events. All of these items we sell generate extra income that helps support the project directly, after first going in the artist's pocket. These sculptures are also available on the website (see [www.ancient-ways.org](http://www.ancient-ways.org)) both wholesale and retail, as are finger puppets and t-shirts. We are currently working on updating the pictures with as many sculptures as possible for your holiday shopping needs!

Since having a product to stimulate interest and education about Nhimbe has helped so much, Jangano is also in the process of sorting out the best approach in this regard. I was gratefully surprised to come across a special style rawhide *dezi* (traditionally a gourd for holding and resonating mbira music) for any of you who are interested in something earthy, unique, and a definite volume increaser. It is made by a local craftsman in Fradreck and Fungai's area who was just doing an experiment. I have one available if you are interested in a test drive! The *dezi* is very large, almost 2' across and matches the low tuning on Fradreck's instrument. It sounds heavenly and I just want to crawl inside it myself.

We are taking orders to support the Jangano project. They can also be made in a smaller size for a regular higher tuned mbira such as the kind in Cosmas' tuning. You will be pleasantly surprised by the look and feel of the *dezi* as a small amount of the hair is still on the hide like a drum, and most importantly the sound rebounds. Please call or email with inquiry about ordering one for yourself.

#### BUSINESS PRACTICES

Ancient Ways has been working hard to run a sound project that is accountable. We have been faced with an enormous task, dealing with thousands of dollars received for one USD for a number of years. Our accountant in Zimbabwe is a God-send and I am so very grateful. We also are receiving advice and expertise from the OSU accounting department thanks to Reed Smith's recommendations. We are learning more and more. They have said that we are doing a remarkable job considering that most everything is through volunteers.

My goal is that we have the finest run operation imaginable both here and in Zimbabwe. One of the things I am doing on each trip there is further and further education in running a business. It became clear early on, that I needed to share my business background there partly so that we could stay afloat and not be drowned by the chaos, but also because someday when things settle down, I want them to have the business savvy to be able to instill confidence in a foreign investor. In a way, even now, for philanthropists to get involved, it requires that they too feel great about our dealings as they are also “investing” their dollars, in humanity.

#### THANK YOU

Again, thank you from the bottom of my heart. We are making a difference and it's you who are behind that. Helen too, came away with much gratitude for all the support that is given to us, as she saw how it all “goes down” on the soil there. I am so grateful for her taking more than a month of her life to become my sister in the bush, imbuing her consciousness with the essence of the people of whose music she loves, and letting her mind and heart be penetrated by all the gifts that offering yourself on the alter of service brings. Thank you Helen!

I feel so good about what we are doing for Zimbabwe, particularly as I met a number of people this time who gave me insight into how foreign aid is being wasted, poured into pockets, and little getting to the front lines. I wish I knew ways for the bigger organizations to be able to work at the grass roots level so that they could be more effective with their money, but maybe its just business and, none of mine. We have our own problems to face and overcome. Thank you all for your continuing support, love, and personal interest in the work we are doing!

Blessings to you and yours,

Jaijen and Helen