

March 17th 2016

Dear Friends,

Another week has come and gone so quickly. You must know that the energy you send with your heartfelt interest helps me push through the obstacles, opens the thickets, and infuses a lightness where otherwise there is density. There are many threads to pull together and just like in the US when there are strange little tangles, it takes some perseverance to sort. I thank you ever so much for your amazing part of these efforts. Thoughts are things. Prayers are power. And intention coupled with either of these brings the needed attention to manifest the focused potential for change, freshness, and renewal. Just in time for spring!

Your caring nature gives me hope, not just for our immediate efforts with the youth, but also for the children who bring us the future. All of us will be living in a world where our children and grandchildren will be sharing an ever expanding technological world with all other earth citizens, and our later years will be governed by their decisions. What they learn now about life, how to observe the past to gain wisdom for the way forward, as well as how to use compassion as a tool to pave the new era, will immensely impact how things weave together or unravel. We are not people separated by continents and countries, or divided by race and religion, but humanity with a common goal of sharing the resources of this planet.

Grasping what the basics of life are, is a gift... it's not obvious. What appears to our senses is often diluted, over-stimulated, misrepresented, fluffed up without substance, etc., so discerning the essential can be elusive. Like all that we take for granted... fresh water, enough energy to produce food, enough food to sustain health, air that heals, medical care for loved ones, freedom to govern one's life and make choices without duress, sovereignty of mind, body, spirit... the list goes on. What are the real requirements for wellness, wholeness, happiness?

THE QUICK VERSION:

- Transport - \$5/gallon, few vehicles on the road, and sardine-like commuter travel are a lifestyle.
- Real African medicine – meeting Sekuru Moyo gives hope for the future.
- Survey results – after some serious interviews, we will have a completely new look at the complexion of the Nhimbe families' living situations.

TRANSPORT

Fuel prices in Zimbabwe are around \$5 a gallon. This added expense increases the costs of everything we work to achieve. So not only are prices high relative to wages, the fuel surcharge always has to be calculated as it's no small part of administering the details. In the rural area, there is nowhere one can really go without a vehicle, as walking ¼ mile might only reach one neighbor, unless of course you hitch a ride in a cart pulled by a donkey. A bicycle is rare... I spent my youth pedaling everywhere possible and places that weren't... what would a childhood be like without a bike? It's hard to imagine the reality of not having a car until you have been stranded for a couple of days in the bush.

This trip I was without transport more than once because I'm not willing to do vehicle rental expense (it just goes against the grain somehow) and so am always working on other options. Half the trip we used a small truck of a friend so anyone else going along as part of the team piles in the back and luckily this time there was a

canopy. This includes older women and men, women in dresses, women carrying babies, sometimes me, and whatever supplies one is taking for the job at hand. I think the record for this kind of entourage was 13 people and one rabbit during one of my first trips in the early 2000's, all in a small size truck.

Vehicles are few and far between, compared to the population. Most people, city or country, will take a couple of commuter buses to get anywhere, and each stretch of the way are waiting for availability, so it takes at least twice as long, as well as the unique experience of 25 people in a van designed for 15...and that is 15 lighter-weight Asian-built people. Then of course, as in one of our adventures, what happens when the commuter bus breaks down half way to one's destination? You're sitting there with all of these people trying to imagine a solution without a clue, but are perfectly clear that the van is not starting. At least it wasn't an elevator.

## REAL AFRICAN MEDICINE

At the end of my stay I was introduced to a traditional Shona healer, Sekuru Moyo, who ended up giving me a ride to the airport without a charge, and sent me home with blessings. He is young for being so knowledgeable, as a 44 year-old well-traveled man, having been to 27 African countries, India, Thailand, the US, and many European countries including Italy, Portugal, Norway, Germany, Canada, and the UK. His knowledge of traditional herbs is extensive and his interest in helping those in poverty is touching. In the midst of the suffering, where so many are demanding so much for so little, it's heart-warming to meet someone who isn't just wanting to, as the Shona say, "pad their pocket".

He was genuinely taken with the efforts that Ancient Ways is making to get the help where it is needed most, and in such a straight-forward manner. He also appreciated the alternative healing work, teaching efforts, and concern for the young that is in my heart no matter which continent I'm on. I was blown away when he said I couldn't pay for my session with him, as those of us "doing spiritual work" can't charge each other. I couldn't believe my ears... not only do most people not understand me, and sort of just tolerate my peculiar personality, but it felt like he could see into my soul and recognized me as a kindred spirit. It was an inspiring moment, giving me courage. Next trip he has offered to assist with sourcing a car and living space from amongst the many clients he has helped in the city, as they often assist him with visitors who are coming internationally to see him. I can't tell you how refreshing it was to have someone offering me something without requiring more, more, more in return.

Often you might begin a transaction, and before one is done, someone has changed the terms, and you being the person in need, have to acquiesce. For years I've written this problem off as poverty, trying to explain it away, as what else can they do? But now I'm also realizing it's more than that. It's also culturally how exchanges are viewed (as long as someone has money they have significant value). This sounds harsh, but the combination of a broken economy, the constant deaths and loss of loved ones, jealousies from years of polygamy, and probably also colonialism, takes its toll, and too many people in modern circumstances carry a profound burden that affects their mind, perspective and behavior.

It's apparent that the ancient Shona ways still live in the heart of some, and are being passed on to a few of the descendants, but by-in-large, it's just like in the states with less and less social fabric from our various heritages, more street kids, growing crime, and the corruption of all of that. For me, it's like the frog being an indicator species for the future of mammals, when we see them vanishing from ponds and streams, we better wake up, so similarly, losing the traditional healers is also a sign about our disconnection with nature around us, and a threatened future of spiritual medicines. Granted, there is a wide variety of experienced healers out there, and just like allopathic doctors, they are not all "good ones", so we can't judge them all the same.

I'm looking forward to working with Sekuru Moyo again next trip, as well as helping him connect with those stateside who are interested in studying with a true African healer from deep in traditional ways. If you know anyone wanting to find a man of this caliber, please feel free to write. He has been sponsored by Ford International, various conventions and conferences on HIV all over the world, as well as started his own herbal clinics in South Africa. And, like the archetype of the "wounded healer", being taken physically ill at a very young age, he will forever carry a unique brand of compassion in his heart.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Like each trip, we again made heroic efforts to capture a picture of what the living conditions are amongst our residents in the rural villages that we serve. I say it was commendable because we had such a small amount of time, and everyone worked diligently. The last two villages turned in their information just as I was leaving.

We initiated the data collection with a detailed training, since each time we return, there are new village representatives polling the neighborhoods. This is a difficult situation because not only do we need to start over in comprehension, but really, there is not that much education within the rural populations, so helping them understand why we want an accurate view of things, so they should not paint a personalized version of reality, as well as translating what we are really asking, brings challenges.

We found out this time that the survey results in the past were skewed because each new family was registering independently, rather than each homestead. That means that if a young couple was living with mom and dad, they would be using that well and toilet, but they might be saying they didn't have one, because someday they would like one. But, to have their own well and toilet they first have to buy their plot of land, their stand to build their home. So we made great efforts to correct that data to show them as part of the parents homestead.

For example, some extended families will show 12 in the home, but that might be the parents, 2 adult children with spouses, a grandparent, another child or two still in school, and then the new additions of the adult children's young ones. Granted, that is a lot of people, but not uncommon in the extended families of Africa. We are getting details, besides whether they have a well and toilet, like how many infants, preschoolers (some going to Nhimbe, some not), primary, secondary, older children, elders, disabled, and how many as head-of-house (single, couple or teen). There is also room on our report for a medical condition description.

Additionally, the unemployment being in the high 90's, as well as the continued rippling effects of the white farmer's land redistribution, means that many people are moving about and being very unsettled. We saw many residents who were recorded as originally registered, then being noted as absent for a few years (so we would extract them from our stats), are now fully deleted, having moved to various places with a predominance of them in South Africa. I am really looking forward to seeing what all of this looks like statistically, particularly since we had such an influx at the preschool with enrollment almost doubling. Of course, we allow anyone who can get there to attend the preschool, so they come from many outlying villages and won't be in our survey. I'm sure the well and toilet percentages will look totally different from previous years.

Another point of interest we included was the age of the elders in the villages. We have been noting how many elders we have for many years, but this time I asked that they write down the age. The timing was just too incredible to have all three centenarians in our 6 villages, pass on during my stay. As noted in a previous field report, the first two who were over 100 years old, passed within my first 10 days, and then the last person, the following week.

This got me very curious. I haven't typed up the survey correction results yet, but could see that there were 40 people who were in our "elder" range of over 70, with the oldest person now a mere 91. It seems that there is

a lot to be said for living close to the land, modestly, simply, and within one's tribal traditions. These people do not have the money to be getting many modern medicines and so show a pretty amazing sign of resilience particularly considering all of the hardships of both lean rural living combined with the economic crisis and the severe weather that disempowers an agrarian people.

IT'S A WRAP

Again, thank you for all the ways you are helping these people. If you have absolutely any ideas for fundraising, through maybe your band or church or family circle, or are interested in grants, or have other connections for helping young girls, preschool children, or health-related concerns, please reach out and say hey. We only do this with your inspiration. I carry a torch, for sure, but don't carry all the fuel to light it or keep it burning brightly... that comes from you!

You continue to make a huge difference for these people...*Tatenda Chaizvo*...thank you very much! Really looking forward to sharing some pictures too over the next few weeks. It takes working with them at home on my regular laptop instead of this tablet (bless its little pointed head).

Faithfully,

Jaiaen