

# Hello America!

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I first want to apologize for my relative silence so far this trip. My laptop died early into my stay, so I've had very little personal computer access and no access to my email updates list. Big thanks to my parents for scouting and sending over a great laptop so I can keep everyone back home involved in what's happening here.

My first two months in Uganda have both flown by and felt like a full year. Each day is crammed with new experiences, so it's hard to get it all down on paper or on the screen. I'll refrain from stuffing your inbox each week, but you can check out my blog ([onewhiteguy.wordpress.com](http://onewhiteguy.wordpress.com)) for regular updates on the day-to-day of life in Uganda. I know I'm a shameless blog promoter, but I think having an outlet to write has helped process all these new experiences.

As far as the basics, it's been about 80 and sunny almost every day and I'm eating well (don't worry mom!) For the first month, I was fortunate to live in the guest house of Uganda's attorney general, thanks to a connection of IJM's legal intern Hannah. It was a huge blessing to have secure housing from the first day. Thankfully, I've found an amazing apartment closer to my office and will move in a few weeks to my permanent Ugandan home.

Luckily, as my third trip to Africa, cultural adjustment has been fairly seamless. I've learned some Lugandan phrases and have thus shocked quite a few locals when I converse in their own language. I've eaten fried grasshoppers from a street vendor and zoomed through town on the back of a motorcycle taxi, but I've yet to feel really overwhelmed by anything. I think keeping an open attitude and being thankful for all of the quirky little experiences has kept me sane. The IJM team has also really helped to educate me on what to expect for the year, so I feel really confident I can handle living in Africa.

Working for International Justice Mission thus far has honestly been incredible. As Communications Fellow, I am an army of one handling all of the media-related tasks for the

office. My responsibilities cover photography and videography, interviewing clients, writing case updates and articles, pitching stories and networking with local media, designing publications, and coordinating a branding campaign for the office. I'm scrambling each day to handle all of these tasks, but loving every minute.

I'm definitely challenged more than I had expected, but I don't know if I could be doing this for any organization other than IJM. The supportive culture here, the investment in my spiritual and professional fortitude, doesn't come around often. I feel like this is a great place to test myself, both professionally and personally.



*boda-boda ride, anyone?*

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand.  
*Philippians 4:6-7*

By faith, these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned into strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight.  
*Hebrews 11:33-34*

These two months have illuminated a lot of encouraging, positive growth around Uganda, but also some troubling issues I had only ever read about. I've seen real poverty and frustrating abuse. I've met orphans, widows, former prostitutes, refugees, and people suffering from AIDS. At times I've been overwhelmed by the problems just in this one small country, but I have to tell you: there is so much hope. Africans have a resilient spirit and an unstoppable desire to succeed. There are incredible, inspiring individuals, including everyone I work with at IJM, who have gone above and beyond to help those around them. Every heartbreak I encounter is met with a revelation of genuine goodness.

The last few days have been a classic example of the meeting of these two extremes. I'm working on a research project in Gulu, in Northern Uganda, the site of twenty years of war and terror by the Lord's Resistance Army. I've been reading Grace Akallo's memoir, *Girl Soldier*, and actually standing in the sites where she was abducted in her teens and forced to fight for the LRA. I've seen the bullet holes in her school's walls and the dirt roads Grace and thousands of other children walked endlessly searching for rescue. Nowadays, these roads are traveled by thousands of NGO and aid workers helping to rebuild the area and restore its people. The transformation will blow your mind.

Even though my job now depends so much on my words, I can't express adequately how thankful I am to everyone who has supported me getting here. I'm so grateful to my family, friends, former coworkers, church members, and all of you who have had a part in fulfilling this dream. Everything I'm doing feels so right and it would never have been possible without your encouraging words, financial support, and prayers.

I promise I will never take a moment of this experience for granted. I especially want to thank everyone for all of the prayers and quick notes after the bombings in Kampala on July 11. I was probably more vulnerable that night than I even know, but somebody bigger than me was definitely looking out.

Thanks y'all! Definitely let me know if there's anything major I've left out or anything you're curious about. I put this email distribution list together from memory, and it's late here, so let me know if I've missed anyone. And keep me updated on your life! I may be halfway across the world, but I'm only an email away.

Thanks so much!

*Scott*

### *Prayer Requests:*

**1** Yesterday was an especially hard day in Gulu for me, realizing that two months ago I was in a cubicle at Arbitron and now I'm in a recovering war zone. I am totally safe and so encouraged by the people I'm meeting, but there are some hard truths to learn here, so I ask for your prayers for my daily education.

**2** As the only communications person in my office, I've been given some awesome opportunities to lead projects and expand my experience, so please pray that I can handle all this new responsibility.

**3** Uganda has a solid network of ex-patriots cycling in and out to work at various NGOs and development projects, so I've met some incredible people, but it's been hard to establish a solid group when folks come and go so regularly. Pray that I can connect with a core group of people to invest in during this year.

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