

Greetings from Uganda

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Few things are as encouraging as the realization that things can be different and that we have a role in making them so.

Daniel Taylor

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and to reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and to be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

From "Where I Lived & What I Lived For" by Henry David Thoreau

It's amazing how much time has already gone by. I've had a busy couple months in the Pearl of Africa, getting used to my new life and reminding myself how awesome it is to be here.

I finished up assisting on the research project, which was definitely difficult but absolutely worth it. Back in the capital, I've moved into a new apartment and have gotten back into the thick of communicating in Kampala. I have been planning some long-term goals for my remaining nine months and am still really excited by the work I'm doing.

From the end of August until now, I've been working alongside our legal team to edit and redesign a legal education handbook to distribute to the community in our project area. This book explains Uganda's law of succession, how to formalize marriages and wills, and ways to protect yourself against property grabbing. I'm also putting together materials for a conference at the end of November, educating church and community leaders on how to promote justice in their towns. The event will really help our goal of ensuring structural transformation in the villages. I'm honored to develop my graphic design and editing skills while helping the poor.

The most enjoyable aspect of my job has been putting together client stories for various venues, learning a ton along the way about property grabbing and its effects on rural Ugandan families. I've gotten to delve deeply into a few client stories for HQ speeches, visitor briefs, and (hopefully) publication on the IJM website. One of my articles, about the radical transformation of a client living with HIV, should appear on the site soon. Another client I've gotten to know, who I met on my first field visit, may have his story included in a top IJM exec's speech. He's been such an example to me of fortitude and familial responsibility and is really just an all around nice guy. He's so excited to be back in school, I've offered to pay his school fees to keep him there.

I've gotten to reinvest in photography, an interest I had barely touched since college. Uganda is incredibly photogenic, so it's been a pleasure even when it's for work. Most of my best shots are for company use only, but you can visit my Facebook page (below) to see some of my casual photos from life in Uganda. I also worked with Grace, another fellow, to design and paint a mural on our office wall. Check that out in the photos as well.



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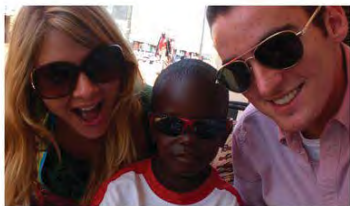
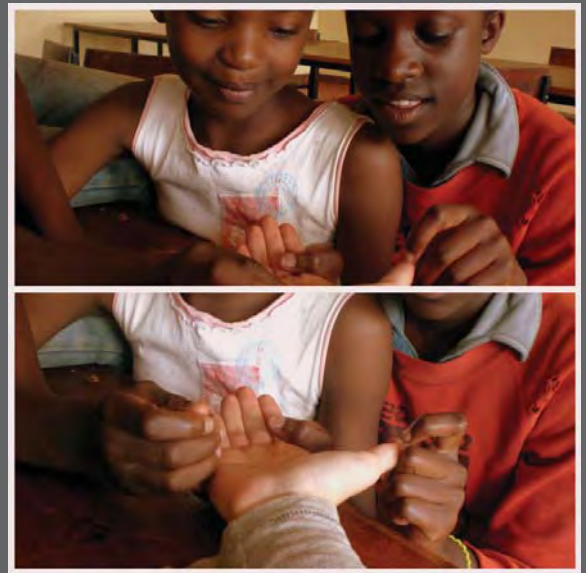
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In September, I took a long weekend to Kenya to revisit the Rafiki Children's Centre where I worked in 2007. It was amazing to see the kids again, catch up on the last few years of their lives, do some manual labor, and see all the changes at the orphanage. My Kiswahili was a little rusty, so the kids laughed at each attempt I made. The night before I left, a dozen of them slipped me hand-written and hand-drawn letters that got me a bit weepy. I didn't realize how just remembering a kid's name and wanting to revisit them would mean so much, but to these kids it's huge. Hopefully I'll get to go back to Rafiki at least once more this year. Shameless plug: fifteen of the current Rafiki kids still lack school sponsorship, so please consider sponsoring a child here:

www.marafikiids.org



Reading list so far:

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Milan Kundera

Here They Come, Yannick Murphy

You Shall Know Our Velocity, Dave Eggers

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Steig Larsson

Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger, Louis Sachar (found in a coffee shop; love this book)

Walden & Other Writings, Henry David Thoreau

Girl Soldier, Grace Akallo

To Own a Dragon, Donald Miller

Personally, I can't complain! I've gotten to know some great people and feel pretty much 100% comfortable with life in Africa. I've visited a few churches and have a much better feel for Kampala's hilly streets. Even our frequent power-outages can't spoil this experience. Every time I start falling into a routine, I catch myself and remember how much things have changed from Maryland to now.

In September, I went with some coworkers to the Uganda vs Angola football (soccer) match at Nelson Mandela Stadium. I expected things to get a bit rowdy, but it was a lot of fun! President Museveni showed up for the first half, but folks were too excited for Uganda's strong lead to be bothered. UG won 3-0 and we went nuts.

Local food, while lacking in variety, hasn't yet gotten old. I've gotten used to lots of rice, beans, matooke (steamed bananas), sweet potatoes, and the occasional groundnut sauce. Not to mention lots and lots of sugary spiced tea. And please don't judge me, but Ugandan stores stock a pretty amazing selection of raman noodles.

This weekend I trekked up to Murchison Falls with friends for a change of pace and a chance to see the wide open wildness of Uganda, then in November we'll do an excursion to Jinja, the source of the Nile, for some possible white-water rafting. Get excited!

Still so thankful to be here,

Scott



Prayer Requests:

1 I've been really fortunate not to be sick here yet, but a few friends have contracted malaria and other ailments, so I'm definitely keeping cautious. It's very easy to get tired and worn, with the heat, foot travel and packed schedule, so please continue to pray for my health.

2 Networking with local journalists in Uganda has been really hard, so pray that I can make the right connections to get IJM's name out there.

3 Uganda's presidential elections will happen in February, but party politics and struggles have started stirring. Please pray that the next few months go smoothly and that Uganda can prove its progress with a fair vote.

4 Please pray for our conference coming up November 30 & December 1, that I'm able to serve my team with great materials and that we effect some change with those leaders.