

Ndinozi Tatenda: A UPEI nursing student "Develops" in Zimbabwe

by Erin Callaghan

Ndinozi Tatenda. Hi, my name is Erin...

During June, I was walking down a street so different from any in Canada that it seemed hard to tell myself I was still on this planet. It was 7:30 a.m. but the streets were as lively as they would be at noon. Little huts of boutiques lined the sidewalk. At the approaching corner there was a vacant lot packed to the brim with an eternal flea-market behind a popsicle stick fence. Black women wore dresses of cloth that were surely once vibrantly colorful. Some had babies on their backs, held by wrapped paper towels; some had large baskets on their heads. The rhythm of an African song was close by. I stopped to look at a stray cat by my feet, but no? It was a monkey that dashed into a palm tree.

A young girl danced up to me. Where there should have been shoes on her little feet, I saw the black flesh of her soles toughened by years of prowling the streets. She carried a box of bananas under her thin arm.

"Buy a banana," she commanded in a Shona accent.

I looked at her for a moment before responding. I smiled to myself at

her rudeness, a rudeness I became used to as a white girl in Zimbabwe.

"I don't like bananas," I replied. This startled her and she looked at me quickly. This was not the usual response from a white girl on her street. She cocked her head and thought.

"Then buy me a banana."

"You like bananas?"

"Ehe, shamwari." Yes, friend.

I handed her 2\$ZIM. We shared a smile together, her eyes lingered, locked with mine. Then she hoisted her bananas above her head and skipped away, her free hand dancing to a song only she heard.

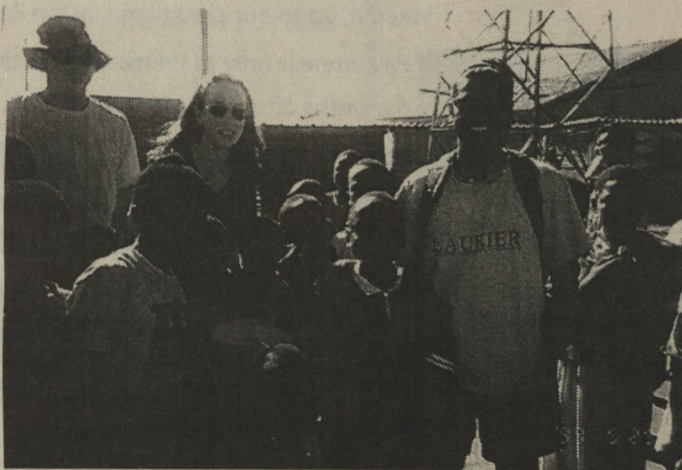
I call this one of my "moments" which helped bring the intense experience I had in Zimbabwe together. My "moments" also helped sink in the reality that, "You're in Africa, girl!"

I spent 6 weeks in various parts of Zimbabwe, Southern Africa, during May and June as part of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) International Seminar. The Seminar was many things to me. Most of all, it was the experience of a lifetime that will carry with me for a lifetime. It was a 6-week experience for twenty chosen Canadian students. It

was an intense time of bonding, friendship and sharing between twenty Canadians and twenty Zimbabwe students of Shona, Zulu and Ndebele descent. It was a series of seminars on international development issues; it was a development

completely different context was a phenomenal opportunity. The souls I met while I did it will be in my memory throughout my career.

I could not have asked for a better way to learn about international development issues. I



Reaching out. WUSC attendees gather with children from Zimbabwe.

and relief project; it was a cultural exchange as well as an independent research experience.

As a nursing student, I did my research project on poverty's effect on holistic health. Zimbabwe was a fitting setting for this as 76% of the population lived in absolute poverty. In a country where 25% of the population is infected with HIV, AIDS was a factor in every inch of my research.

Experiencing my future profession in a

personally experienced a developing country, among exotic animals, with an endlessly sunny sky, strangely different stars and the rhythm of African music from the back of a jam-packed bus driven by a man with obvious disregard for human life.

Development is people. It was the people I met, the ones who were working for a better life than they have now. They were who I worked with at a manure farm and people I met at the sunflower oil press. They were at the Capota School for the

Blind, as well as the high density areas where your "neighbour" is really your neighbour because you can stick your head out of your window and into theirs to take the water off the stove if they are busy. And it was the people I met while I was doing my research project at the hospitals, the AIDS hospices and in Red Cross homes.

The Seminar was a blast, besides an amazing learning experience... the beat of Zimbabwean music and the instinctive dance... the safaris through the Game Parks... the campfire songs... the bucket showers... Zambezi beer and sambuka... sadza for

every meal... pink and green toilet paper... my homestay father who was a tribal chief... white water rafting a grade 5 canyon... the world's highest bungee jump off a bridge over a waterfall... the friendship... I could go on and on about why this was the best trip of my life.

Besides the love and passion I hold for Zimbabwe, I also walked away with a hate for it. I hate the politics, the injustice, the inequality; the Mercedes-Benzes of the rich compared to the children with no shoes, asking for

money on the streets. I hated the precious years of human life lost due to the ravages of poverty. I hated the bleak future facing this culture I loved so much.

I walked away from this experience in Zimbabwe with a desire to help people. I have a chance to do my small part here at UPEI with my local WUSC committee. Our main intent is our Refugee Sponsorship Program. This program brings one student every second year to our university from a refugee situation in a developing country. We help give them an education and cover their costs, helping them adapt to a new country. We give them a brighter future. As well as a student levy to support this program, WUSC needs the support of UPEI students for our development education efforts. In order to do this, we need more support than our dollars bring us. We need manpower. I am asking you to join our efforts.

WUSC's International Seminar will be taking place in Zimbabwe in May of 2000. For more information attend the meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m., Kelley 237. Contact Leo Cheverie @ 566-0630 or Erin Callaghan at 368-2159, or ercallaghan@upei.ca.

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