

BLACKIEONAMMISSION

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Optimistic because.....

Sometimes the waters on...

Yes - you never know what you are going to get - the tap may come on at first and then after a bit of a spit and a splutter barely without warning and it is off again! It has been hot maybe twice and lukewarm a few more times than twice, pretty much when it is on it is cold - so I guess it makes for a quick - get in, get the job done and get out again!

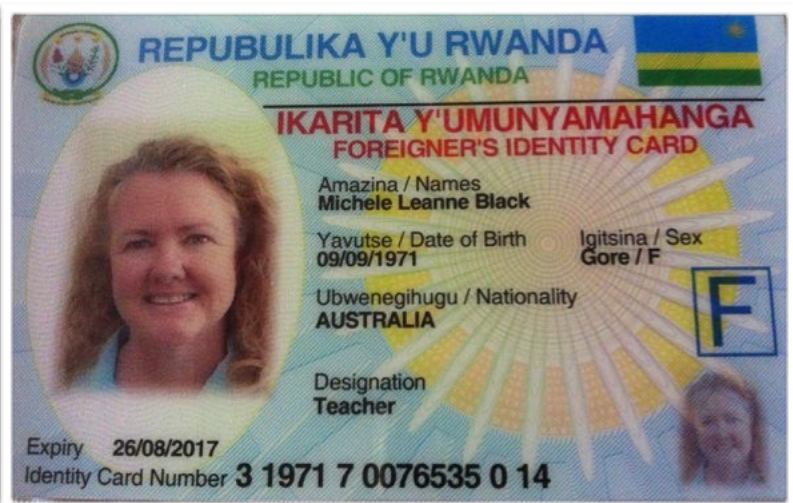
But then as I stand at my kitchen window and look out across the valley after a night filled with torrential rain I see men, women and children often in bare feet as they walk with the fresh mud squelching through their toes, all carrying yellow gerry cans on their heads - and I am so thankful for my cold - sometimes when the water is on showers!

Sometimes the powers off...

You can be right in the middle of cooking your dinner on the only portable hot plate, no we don't have an oven (it's on the wish list) and all of a sudden the lights go out, your dinner is half cooked and you think, oh well I will do something else, something like check my emails but you have a flat battery so you go to plug in your charger and you remember - oh yeah that needs electricity too! Or you can be working on something on your computer and you don't realise you are actually sitting in the dark until the lights come back on!

I'm now Rwandese!

I have a Rwandan Identity card and Fred threatens to paint me black to make me really Rwandese. Lesson learnt, never go



to immigration straight from the gym, with your hair back in a knot, no makeup, and a few grey tinges on the side - because they ask you to sit in a chair and smile - then they scan your fingerprint! So the passport can be safely stashed away - not that it is yet, and the ID card is now in use!

Laundry day...

We've all got to do laundry the world over - I guess some of us put it in a machine, add some powder, turn it on and then walk away for an hour or so. Meanwhile others bend over for half a day scrubbing their laundry by hand, in bare feet and drying it on the hedge nearby!





When it rains it really rains...

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This photo was taken last Tuesday after the heaviest rain I have ever seen in Rwanda. The school was pretty much flooded and they had a landslide of soil in the bottom half of their playground. The usual path we use to walk home was flooded so for the first time in 8 years Fred walked me through the 'village'. It could almost have been a culture shock for some, as one side of the road is quite western housing while the other side is very much village life. We walked past babies having outdoor baths, Mummies starting to cook their evening meal, men tending to the cows in the cow shed. There was plenty of mud and plenty of stories of how mzungus can't walk in mud like the locals - I'm sure they were all laughing at my expense. I had my skirt and rainbows on!

Language Learning?

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I have started some language lessons and I so want to learn it as quickly as I can so I went from one 2hr session a week to three 2 hr sessions a week. Funnily enough I am actually really enjoying them - I even come home and give myself homework, make memory games and last Saturday I even gave myself a test - I got 86% mind you - so who knows I might just be interpreting before we know it! I always try to test what I learn out on the kids because they are the most responsive and at most the most honest too! The hardest thing was remembering what is a noun, a verb, an adjective etc etc - by the time you have to remember all of those things I reckon whoever you are talking to would have walked away!

Yes I have started 'work'...

Well the weeks seem to be just flying by - I have already officially completed four weeks of work for The King's College.....must be time for a Rostered Day Off I reckon!

In consultation with Fred we have started writing a curriculum which over time will need to be accredited by the REB - Rwandan Education Board - and we have started using some of the lessons during Fruits of Hope Teacher Development afternoons, so far with a very positive result from the teachers. We have agreed on areas for our curriculum and should you be interested in further information just flick me an email privately as everything now will need to have copyright before I share on public forums.

I have observed each of the four nursery teachers for a day each in their classes, and written up a three page report on each of them. We also developed a staff appraisal form and they all graciously completed that and this week I am meeting with them to give them their staff review and hear a little of how they are feeling about their role at Fruits of Hope. They all seem just lovely and I look forward to getting to know them so much more next year as we work more closely.



For all you preschool teachers out there - who needs fancy drying racks to peg the kids paintings on? These kids just go outside, find a rock and place it on their artwork! Much easier than trying to manipulate a peg when you're only 3yrs old!

My Friday's?

On a Friday morning I leave home at 7:30am and catch a taxi to my friends house and we go to 'body and soul' together. On a Friday the class is a weights class and I love it - oh and the timing is so much more civilised than 5:45am which is what I was doing at home for exercise!

Then we go back to Linda's for a snack, and I have a shower, the taxi comes back and drives me across town to J.Lynn's Cafe. J.Lynn's is run by Serg and Jen who are also with International Teams and they run a cafe that employs local women to train them and employ them. They sell all sorts of yummy things from cupcakes to donuts and tortillas and pizzas. They do delivers all over town and on a Friday they participate in a market stall for two hours at the American Embassy. So my job is to sell bagels and cookies to all the Americans who work in the embassy - it is a little (well very large embassy) white world - there are mainly mzungus (white people) and of course my favourite thing was the automatic flushing toilets - fancy a toilet in Rwanda that flushes on it's one! There are other stalls in there too like the fruit and veg man, two craft stalls and a lady selling tea and coffee. It was a great day and I look forward to spending more time there. I was doing some great 'upselling' I asked one man if he wanted to please his wife by taking a pizza home for dinner - he wasn't thinking about pizza but he bought it anyway!

Of course the Americans have to try and guess where my accent is from and none of them get it right. I told one guy I was from down south and he said "South Africa" - Umm no - so he guessed "England or Scotland" - Umm neither? Because I said neither he said, "Oh you're from the Netherlands!!!!" Noooooooo - Australia! Then he says - oh is that why you talk like you need a cup of tea and a scone? We don't even sound English but they all think I am from the UK!



How do you buy your milk? Is it delivered to your house or do you have to actually go to the shops and buy it? As I was walking past the other day the milk man was doing his deliveries and distributing the milk. I guess it doesn't have far to come as the cow shed is just down in the valley on the other side of the road.



This photo was taken out of my bedroom window - I love it - to me it depicts everything of a life well lived through this umusaza (old man) - I love that he takes so much pride in what he wears, everyday is his 'Sunday best' - his three piece suite topped off with his bowler hat. I love that the lines on his face tell stories of deep pain and sorrow yet life itself brings so much joy, I love that he takes his time slowly walking up the red dusty hill with his faithful companion, his walking stick. And I particularly love that his smart black shoes have been replaced with a pair of comfy and practical joggers - go well Umusaza!

Just a few funnies...

Lioness Arising!

I was walking to school the other day and just like every other day someone called out 'mzungu' (meaning white person) - I always give a wave and if its a very young child I go over and say hello to them. This day I waved and just kept waving. I heard it again - "Mzungu!" - "Mzungu!" - "Hey Mzungu - you look like a lion - yeah you are a lion with a big mane!" I happened to have my hair in a side pony tail this day so yes I could see how they might think I was a lion with a big mane! Compared to their black tight curly hair my blond curls could well have been a mane in their eyes!

Sharing a house with a two year old!

So, sharing a house with a two year old who actually belongs to you and sharing a house with a two year old who belongs to somebody else I think are two very different things. A bit like when it's your own two year old and you're sitting on the toilet and she comes in and opens the door which actually opens outwards - far beyond your reach and you soon realise it is all over! She speaks three different languages fluently and when she hears 'close the door' in an Australian accent she just stands there with her big brown eyes - oh yeah I forgot to mention that she is Rwandan - and seems to be completely non verbal for that moment in time - until her Mom Mom comes and closes the door apologising profusely - like I say may be funny when it's your two year old!

The very next day - opening the bathroom door soon became the new party trick - we all know 2 years learn through repetition! This time - the white 'mzungu' living in the Rwandan 2 year olds house was in the shower - yep stark naked and that outward opening door - still opened outward that day too! Those big brown eyes were some what intrigued by this white body in her house!!! And I, also learn through repetition - I learnt real quick to start locking the bathroom door!

Smile if you're not wearing undies...

This is the sign that I read on a young Rwandan boys t-shirt - I had to stop and read it twice - oh how I wanted to take a photo but I walk through their backyard everyday to get to school and I need to keep good relationships with the locals so I resisted. I was walking with Venna (Fred's wife) and I asked her to read his shirt - she also laughed so we had a good chuckle together. I asked her to ask him if he even knew what it meant in English and through his gestures it seems he did! There are some very funny slogans on t-shirts over here but I think this has been the funniest.

How much is an apple anyway?

I went down to the markets the other day for the first time on my own and I was asking how much the apples were - the lady said they were 200Francs. I wondered if they really were 200Francs or if maybe she had seen the colour of my skin and assumed that means a deep pocket. So I asked her if she actually meant 100Francs? Some of her friends came over and I found myself squabbling over 100Francs which of course is never about the money but more about the reverse racism and the principle. Then I heard someone say, "Michele" - it was a friend who owns a shop in the market place and he told me that the apples are always 200Francs that was the price they are every day. So that 100Francs I was fighting over was actually 13 US cents! Cheapskate!

If you would like to contribute to the purchase of some 13c apples - remember you can always visit

blackieonamission.com. My website just had it's 1st birthday in October so if you made a one off donation to help me get to Rwanda, now that I am here - would you consider helping me stay here a little longer? My monthly support is sitting at 60% at the moment and to sustain longevity to stay here I need to increase that to 100% - bless you.