



Kimana Kenya

Arayah Passero • July-Aug 2018

My name is Arayah Passero, and I am eighteen years old. I'm originally from Liberia West Africa. When I was seven years old, I was adopted into a wonderful family. Eldest of eight children, we live in Rochester New York. My hope is to gain medical skills particularly in the field of midwifery and to travel internationally. I want to be able to advocate for many young girls who experience childbirth at a young age, help overcome Female Mutilation, and increase better birthing experiences in third world countries, while testifying of this radical God who changes the hearts of men.





Located three hours away from Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, Kimana is a busy and colorful settlement. Due to the semi-arid climate, agriculture is difficult. Traditional Maasai lifestyle revolves around their cattle which forms their primary source of food. The measure of a man's wealth is in terms of cattle and children. A herd of 50 cattle is an abundance, and the more children the better.

Despite the harmony and bright smiles, rooted deep into their culture are beliefs, stigmas, and superstitions that have brought immense heartaches and health issues for many. To be a girl in Kimana is extremely challenging. In the midst of rampant Female Mutilation, domestic violence, and poor living conditions, Hope Beyond was created to bring restoration, security, and hope to hurting girls and boys in the community.



Founders of Hope Beyond, John and Dorcus Parit rescue girls who experience early marriage, Female mutilation, and domestic violence. Hope Beyond is a transitional center where girls (and boys) find healing while trust and reconciliation is slowly built between them and their families. In time the girls return back to their homes with some form of an education that will help them towards a higher degree.



I was graciously invited by my friend Kaela Sitting to travel with her to serve at Hope Beyond. She had been there previously for a year. Through her I learned about the amazing lives they were transforming. Kaela is currently a student at Brockport and is majoring in social work. Throughout our stay in Kimana, it was heartwarming to watch her interact with the girls at Hope Beyond.





Having an opportunity to go to Africa not only excited me because it had been a dream of mine for so long, I was also looking forward to learning about the culture and people I hoped to work with in the future. This trip was eye opening for me in many ways.



While in Kenya, daily life at Hope beyond consisted of washing clothes, cooking for thirty plus children, cleaning, doing homework, and counseling. Because the goal is to equip the girls and boys with good virtues and life skills, they are each given chores that contribute to the household.





Cooking meals was a great time to bond and talk with the girls.

Laundry day was like a social event. The girls would help each other wash, while chatting and braiding hair. I learned how to wash clothes the “true African way”





Apart from the chores that were implemented to help build their character, the girls also participated in mental health therapies. Many of the kids from Hope Beyond deal with past traumatic experiences. I came alongside the one native social worker there and Kaela Sitting to help counsel the girls. We did many therapeutic exercises that identified their self worth. Forgiveness was always a huge topic that we covered extensively.

Like all girls around the world, these girls long for friends who will accept them for who they are despite what they've been through. I was truly able to serve in this capacity. To them being a friend meant joining in on their hobbies such as soccer, dancing, and bracelet making, being loyal with a compassionate heart, and lastly having a listening ear.





While on a nature walk, one of the girls began to walk alongside me. When she was born, she was abandoned in the bush and left to die. Her grandma found her and took her in, but was mentally ill and couldn't properly take care of her. Unlike most of the girls at Hope she did not undergo FGM because her tribe didn't practice it. As she grew up, her dad was very abusive, which eventually led to her running away. Somewhere during this time, she became pregnant. Having no where else to be, she was placed in jail. For a girl of sixteen, she'd experienced so much!

John and Dorcas found her in jail and placed her into their program. She has dreams to become a pilot. I'm thankful for the opportunity to have spoken with Jane. She taught me how love can positively affect someone who has only known heartache. As a Kenyan, she educated me about the many types of FGM that were practiced in Kenya, along with the many birth rituals and practices they performed during labor.





My time in Kenya not only taught me about the culture and people, I also grew in my spiritual knowledge as well. Being surrounded by so much pain is never easy, yet God showed me how pain refines, and brings us closer to Him.

I hadn't realized how much I take for granted. Not everyone has clean water to drink, not all are surrounded by family that love and care for them, not everybody has enough to eat. I learned so much about myself. This trip confirmed my vision; that there is a huge need in women's mental and physical health in Africa. I'm convinced of my calling in life.





Questions

