

INTRODUCTION:

If you are a Zambian living in the Diaspora anywhere in the world, would you please answer the following 2 questions?:

1. Do you deeply value and cherish your Zambian cultural heritage; history, geography, political history, language, food, geographic location, family, food, music, education and many other aspects?



2. Would you like your children and perhaps grandchildren to have an opportunity in which they can visit Zambia, learn about and experience or be immersed in the culture, and the people that you cherish so much?



If the answers to both questions are “Yes”, there is a project proposal that you can directly get involved in that may achieve or fulfill your desires or dreams.

This idea came to me after I was a guest on “Brain Drain Radio” on November 21 hosted by Mr. James Mwape. During that program I heard passionate opinions from many Zambians in the Diaspora about the lack of strong Zambian heritage of rituals and customs that Zambian children in the Diaspora can get exposed to in order to know and truly appreciate their Zambian culture and rich heritage.

One caller on the radio said they could not afford to return with their children to Zambia either because it was so expensive or they do not have a solid family foundation in Zambia to be the hosts if they visited. One caller even said they envy Diaspora citizens of other African countries that have solid cultural rituals that they expose their children to in their communities abroad or in the Diaspora.

My proposal is based on my frustrations over the years that my children could not visit Zambia frequently from the US during their younger years due to lack of money. I am also probably one of the lucky few in the Zambian

Diaspora because my late American Mother-in-law helped in paying tickets for the children the 3 times I took them to Zambia when they were in 6th, 7th, and 9th Grade to briefly visit with family and grandparents in Lusaka and the village in Lundazi in the Eastern Province of Zambia.

PROPOSAL:

All willing Zambians in the Diaspora can contribute money. After some very careful research and planning, purchase a piece of land preferably about an hour or two outside the Capital City of Lusaka in a beautiful scenic rural location. Build a center for “Zambian Children in the Diaspora”. The center is where Zambian children can go to for a month to be immersed in the Zambian cultural heritage.

Anybody today can get facts about Zambia on the internet: per capita income, literacy rate, political system, HIV/AIDS infection rates, transportation, watch videos on the TV on the travel channel or National Geographic, there are often plenty negative news programs about Zambia and Zambians on Western or American commercial news, Gross Domestic Product, rates of poverty, unemployment, rates of corruption in index, the number of tribes and languages. What will be very distinctive and unique about the proposed center will be to immerse Zambian children into practical and positive aspects of Zambian Culture and use of technology. This is very important. These are aspects of our culture that are at the heart of who we are as a strong, proud, and good people.

It is how we talk to each other on the bus as passengers, how we cook, serve, and eat nshima in our homes, how we talk to each other at the market, at kitchen parties, at weddings, how we pray in church, bury our dead, how we dance, how boys and girls, men and women dress and behave in public and in private, how we treat each other as family members, how we express love, respect, how and what we laugh about, our compassion, our good heartedness and generosity.

How is actual rural life in the villages including customs, dances, festivals, soccer games, schools, and clinics? What does our poverty look like in reality? How do our rich people live? We are also politically very peaceful. We also have so many traditional dances and music that our children would actually not only participate in but really enjoy. The practical aspects are more important because we all do enough of the passive watching of videos and public lectures about Zambia. These are things that our children cannot read about or just see on videos and the internet and appreciate them as deeply. The children can only best understand, absorb, cherish them, and pass them on to their children if they personally experience them. This “Center for Diaspora Children” can do that very well and effectively.

HOW CENTER WILL OPERATE:

The idea is that once per year after years of planning and saving money, the Zambian Child in the Diaspora from any part of the world will travel to the Center in Zambia outside Lusaka when they are between may be 13 and 20 years old. At the center they will learn about Zambia from different Zambians; men, women, girls, boys, and others. The children will go on daily field trips including hiking the savannah woods and grasslands, rivers, creeks, and streams, visit villages, markets, city compounds, schools, visit the State House, The University of Zambia, and any other conceivable places of interest.

This is as much as possible will not be the typical tourism where the Diaspora Zambian child will stand around take picture of the <i>“natives”</i> in Zambia doing their strange things. But the Zambian children from the Diaspora will immerse themselves as much as possible in the languages, food, and rituals. The assumption here is that the parents and the family of the Diaspora child will have already stressed to them and created the expectations in the children that this is part of their growing up or rite of passage as a man or woman that fully belongs to the Zambian cultural heritage. If possible, the children can arrange a trip to visit with their extended family members in other parts of Zambia in the rural provinces during the same period.

After they have completed the trip doing and participating in all the rituals, trips, and programs, they can be issued with a certificate after completing a big ceremony in which they personally partipate in dance, song, music the day before they depart at Lusaka International Airport returning back to their parents and home in the Diaspora. . They will return back to their Zambian Diaspora home with memorable pictures, videos, stories, social connections about Zambia, which they will share with their friends, and will remember and cherish for the rest of their lives.

Let's talk about the feasibility of such a project on the Brain Drain Radio. I will be the guest on the show again this Saturday November 28, 2009 at 10:00 hours Eastern Standard Time. Tell other Zambians about this program and bring your best contributions forward.