

Newsletter no.9

(Number nine) Number nine, number (Number, number nine, number nine)

(Picture the opening of Apocalypse Now)

This is the end
Beautiful friend
This is the end
My only friend, the end

Of our elaborate plans, the end
Of everything that stands, the end
No safety or surprise, the end
I'll never look into your eyes again

DON'T WORRY I HAVE SHAVED



(EVEN THE STACHE!) AND CUT MY HAIR AND BATHED SINCE THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN.

ALSO, I RIPPED THAT SHIRT. IT'S IN THE TRASH NOW. PROBABLY BURNED AT THIS POINT

Start:

Sorry for the long delay! I've been busy with the computer lab implementation, grad school applications, and writing a novella. Now that that's all done I started writing this. I have less than a month left in my service. Yipee!



When I first got here the building above was a drab concrete color and was only 2.5 stories tall as you see above. Now it is 4 stories tall, painted, and somewhat finished on the inside. Is the building up to code you ask? I don't know. But in the words of my Principal, "the yellow paint is nice and very sexy." The red circle is the location of our new computer lab. That you helped complete! Pictures and details below.



The Construction Process:



The Priest Blessing the new Computer:

Father pulled up and doused our computers in Holy Water. I hope that stuff is distilled!



From left to right: two students, the Chairwoman of the Board, the Principal: Dr. Echessa, the Vice Chair of the Board, the new Volunteer: Hazel, the head of the PTA, the Catholic Father, Volunteer: Trevor Cox, Vice Principal: Mr. Amalemba, my Counterpart & Computer Teacher: Mr. Anunda

The Finished Product:



Computer Lab finished!

Finally after delay upon delay the computer lab is complete. When I first got here this space was just a few walls and concrete now it is a fully working and functional computer lab. In total your contributions got us to about \$9,100. With this we were able to purchase 34 desktops with uninterrupted power supplies (those are the black boxes next to the monitors), a new printer, a router, and a projector. Your donations also payed a carpenter, and welder to construct custom computer desks, chairs, and tables. Also, your donations payed for an electricians labor and some of the floor tiles you see in the room. The school contributed money for the electrician's materials, the purchasing and installation of the floor tiles, the lights, the new whiteboard, the painting of the room, the curtains, and the installation of doors and windows. I've estimated the schools contribution at around \$6,000. So in total it took \$15,000 to complete this computer lab. What a deal! You couldn't do that in America.

Official Government Record Computer Lab Story.

To officially complete the computer lab grant in the Peace Corps CRM I was required to submit a story. The CRM is a black box and it seems like nobody reads anything in it except for the Kenyan staffer in charge of it. To make her job easy I submitted a short and sweet Haikou here it is:

Computer lab built.
Planning, labor, and money.
Job is completed

This left her confused. I explained to her that a Haikou is a 5-7-5 syllable form of poetry invented by the Japanese and that the Haikou is the first form of poetry that American kids experiment with. I think this made her more confuse she said, "we can do better than this." Although I don't know why she used the inclusive, "we." We had not written the story together. Disappointed by my beautiful Haikou I can only assume she wanted something longer. In Kenya the longer you speak the more important you are even if that speech/story is super boring so instead I gave her a long, possibly boring, story.

I had recently read a travelogue by a Jewish author who goes on a road trip through dixie. It's called *Confederates in the Attic*. It was entertaining, but maybe a bit long. One of the chapters starts with him reading Faulkner's description of Pickett's charge to a Virginian trailer park resident:

For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances which made more men than Garnett and Kemper and Armistead and Wilcox look grave yet it's going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake and that moment doesn't need even a fourteen-year-old boy to think This time. Maybe this time with

all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory the desperate gamble, the cast made two years ago; or to anyone who ever sailed a skiff under a quilt sail, the moment in 1492 when somebody thought This is it: the absolute edge of no return, to turn back now and make home or sail irrevocably on and either find land or plunge over the world's roaring rim.

"That fucker sure could write!" Was the Virginians response. This inspired me to read Faulkner again, but I haven't gotten around to that. I did, however, write my second grant story as a pastiche of Faulkner. Fortunately, for the Kenyan Staffer, the Peace Corps CRM story section limits you to 6,000 characters. My goal was to hit 6,000 exactly. Perhaps my story's length will prove that my grant is the greatest most significant development project done in the history of Peace Corps Kenya or Peace Corps in general or Kenya in general or the entire history of international development dating back to the Marshall Plan. So for your enjoyment here it is.

The Revelries of a Grant Implementor

We rush out of the school, my principal and I, to Kakamega. We're traveling in his dilapidated Toyota Probox or the Nissan equivalent of a Toyota Probox. It is dark grey, the back fender is falling off, and the radio buttons are in Chinese or Japanese - I can't tell. We go to a construction supply store to purchase boards for tables in the new computer lab. The store is called Vikram's Iron Mongers. Yes, you heard that correctly, "Iron Mongers," as if it was a blacksmith shop from the Middle Ages. Like most businesses in Kakamega, it's owned by an Indian. Inside Vikram's is a young Indian man and a few older Kenyans. We pick out the boards we want called, "stone grey." My principal argues with the young Indian to reduce the price because we are paying today in cash. The man is exasperated and he reduces the price by 170 ksh per board. We purchase two boxes of nails, a liter can of glue, a roll of lipping, and 8 boards. My Principal insures me that this is more than enough boards for the tables in the computer lab. That will not be the case. We will have to return to Vikram's twice to purchase more boards. As an older Kenyan worker puts the nails, glue, and, lipping into a bag memories of the glue sniffers rush into me. I see the young homeless kids from the parks in Kisumu and Kakamega sniffing yellow liquid from recycled Predator bottles. (Predator is a popular energy drink in Kenya that is also yellow.) The liquid that is in these bottles, however, is not of the same consistency as water like the regular Predator drink. Nope, this liquid is thick, this liquid is glue and the children are sniffing it getting high and killing brain cells. This depresses me. A few weeks ago, my counterpart asked me why there are homeless people in America if it is such a rich nation. He says, "Kenya is a poor nation, well not super poor, but poorer than America most definitely, yet in Kenya there are no homeless people. Everyone here has a home." I squint my eyes at him and say, "If there are no homeless people here explain those glue-sniffing children in the parks." He replies, "Those children are not homeless, everyone here has a home, they would just rather do drugs than be at home and go to school." I dropped it. There's no point in getting into an unwinnable argument with your counterpart. Back to the ironmongers. We have purchased the goods, but the boards are not in this shop. They're in a warehouse pass Kakamega's large open-air market. Where merchants are selling rejected goods from the Western world. Gucci t-shirts spelled with one c, Supreme sweats spelled "supareme," and Thrasher hoodies spelled "tahrher." Anything you could have ever wanted only with slight defects that caused Western buyer to scoff and reject the goods. Now they're here in giant plastic sacks being sold for the equivalent of one or two dollars. So we go by this market and to the warehouse that houses the iron, the boards, sacks of concrete, and various other large construction materials. I forgot to mention. Before we go to the warehouse we hire a pickup truck for ksh 1,500 or about \$11. This pickup truck will take these boards and bring it to our school, which is 30 minutes up the road. (30 minutes north of Kakamega.) It is a Catholic school called Saint Monica Lubao. Lubao is the town it is located in or village would be a more

appropriate term. Saint Monica is the mother of Saint. Augustine who wrote Confessions. She's remembered for living a very pious life, and for being cheated on by her adulterous husband. Legend has it that she cried every night for her son. Although, I don't know why that's noteworthy. You can read more about her on Wikipedia, which is where I got all of this information from. She's also known as the patron Saint of mothers, which I guess is why we kicked out a student from our school for getting an abortion. Anyway, we show up at the warehouse with this hired pickup truck. I'm carrying a receipt from the first young Indian man, and I hand it to an older Indian man who is sitting inside this warehouse at a brown desk. There is a stick of incense burning on his desk, "for praying" he tells me. The receipt is written in Hindi and it describes what we've purchased. "Twende! Twende! Stone grey eight pieces." He liltts at his Kenyan workers as they come out of the background. They are wearing incredibly dirty clothes, worn-out shoes, and helmets of fabric for carrying the large plywood boards on their heads. My principal will later tell me that these workers are payed about three to four hundred shillings a day or about \$3. As they carry the boards they ask me If I can buy them Chai. Before I can respond my principal barks at them to leave me alone and "acha mzaha," which translates to "stop joking." The workers load the boards onto the pickup truck and we take off back to Saint Monica Lubao. As we exit a giant red Coca Cola truck blocks our way and we have to wait a few minutes until it passes. The construction supply warehouse is next to a Coca-Cola distribution center. Coca-Cola has a monopoly in Kenya. Well at least in all of the dukas in the rural villages. Any liquid sold in those tiny shops is owned by Coca-Cola. Yellow Fanta, Orange Fanta, Purple Fanta, Sprite, Stoney, Krest, Water, Minute Maid juices. It's all owned by Coca-Cola. The free market is beautiful. So the truck passes us and we make our way back to our school Saint Monica Lubao. The road is littered with potholes, random speed bumps, and traffic cops in green hoodies who will cite you for any infraction with your car unless you pay them "something small." Luckily they see that me, a white Mzungu is riding shotgun in my principal's car and these traffic cops don't stop us. We arrive back at our school and my Principal commands a group of male students to unload the heavy boards from the pickup truck. The students take the boards two at a time and deposit them in the school's brand new four story lab building. Is this child labor? IDK.

Now do you understand how I felt implementing this grant? Probably not. It's hard to put experiences into words. But don't worry there's a [movie](#) you can watch instead! See next page.



Volunteer Cooper with a Kenyan MAGA

Empire of Dust.

There's this movie of a Chinese man, Lao Yang (老楊), trying to repave a road in the Congo. It's called Empire of Dust. As I implemented my computer lab I related to this man very much. This documentary captured my struggles better than I could put in words. It's only an hour long and it's free on YouTube. If you're interested. Here's he is



The Student and the Rabbit.

Here's one of my students. His name is also Trevor. After teaching a Math Lesson one day he asked me. "Mwalimu do you like rabbit? Do you eat rabbit?" I said, "not really." He then pulled out this rabbit from his desk and tried to sell it to me. The rabbit proceeded to piss and shit all over the surrounding students. I told some other teachers about this funny stories and they didn't find it funny. They told me that "he is on drugs" and this "needs to be investigated." I don't know how the investigation turned out.



Different Forms of Math

Kenya uses what I can only assume is the British system to teach math. Excuse me it's called "Maths" here.

Some strange differences:

- The term "Square root" is used here, but it is also referred to as "anti-power." Neat.
- The term "Scientific notation" is called "Index form" here. Neat.
- They don't use the '\$' obviously. Instead when talking about Kenyan shillings they denote that as "/=" Neat.
- "Loose leaf" is called "full scrap." Neat.
- "Staples" are called "pins." Neat.
- I'm annoyed at a colleague I say to my counterpart, "so and so is so dumb!" His response: "What do you mean he's dumb? He talks all the time." Here dumb only means "mute" not necessarily "stupid." Neat.
- "Hoteli" does not mean hotel it means restaurant here. Neat.
- They drive on the other side of the road. Neat.
- Middle school kids here do not play the penis game. As in challenging your friends to shout "penis" louder and louder. I've explained this game to my Kenyan coworkers they've never heard of it! Can you believe that? I've even tried getting this game going with some middle schoolers. No takers!
- And the biggest one is their order of operations acronym. Instead of PEMDAS they use BODMAS. BODMAS stands for Brackets, Orders/Of, Division, Multiplication, Addition, and Subtraction. So the last four are the same, but the first two? What the h is that? They do not, what so ever, use the term parentheses it is only brackets. These "(" are brackets. These "[]" are square brackets. These "{ }" are curly brackets. If you use the term "parentheses" the students look at you as if you're speaking another language. Then we have "orders/of," which encapsulates, exponents, square roots/anti-power, and of. Of? I'm sure you're asking well that is just multiplication done before regular multiplication. If you have a problem $5 \text{ of } 2$ that equals 10. However, if you had the following problem $5^2 \text{ of } 2^2$ this causes ambiguities and it isn't clear, at least according to the teachers in my school, which you should do first. In good old US of A taking of as multiplication the above would yield the answer: 100. But here the teachers have told me that 100, and 2 500 are acceptable. Oh that's another thing you don't use commas to separate every three digits.

Okay that's a lot but one other weird thing they use is the metric system. I guess that's easier to understand, but it does cause confusion among my students who are already struggling with the language of instruction and testing: English. "Teacher how do you convert from centimeter to kilogram?" "Teacher to take form the centigrade to the milliliter how is that done?" Hmm interesting maybe having all measurements share the same: "centi-", "milli-", "kilo-", prefix causes confusion. That's why the US system is so great every for of measurement has it's own distinct name. Ergo no confusion! Base-10? Who needs that. When we've got yards, pounds, gallons, and Fahrenheit. I mean Fahrenheit 451 is a way better name than Celsius 233. Okay in science use Celsius fair enough. But for the weather it makes way more sense to use Fahrenheit. 0 very cold, 100 very hot, 50 mild. With celsius you have way less degrees to play with so when talking about weather it'll make you less precise. Also, the metric system was designed by the French. They already have French fries are we going to subjugate ourselves to this rational French tyranny. No thank you!

Is this my first reactionary opinion? Is this a sign of aging. First you're clutching to the US measurement system then you're voting for Baron Trump. I hope not.



At a training with Aaron and Reuben

Long Pinky Nail

This could be a rumor or not, but no Kenyan has truthfully answer my questions about this observation. Some Kenyan men have a long pinky nail on their left hand. Are they sniffing drugs? Playing guitar? They tell me simply it's because they like it. Then I remember during training that we were instructed to only shake with the right hand because well the left hand is used for well if you don't know look it up. I thought that was just a Muslim thing, but I guess it's a Kenyan thing. So yea they use that extended pinky nail to scratch out anything that remains down there. At least that's what a veteran Peace Corps Volunteer told me. It makes sense because nobody seems to use toilet paper here! Unless they're all carrying it around with them. Whenever you go to a local/village toilet there is never any toilet paper in the bathroom. The bathroom, which is often just a hole in the ground. You learn very quickly that you always need to be carrying a roll with you. I've got mine stashed in my desk and In each of my bags incase shit hits the fan. Literally.



Scary Whites

Missionaries

I know that you all know how rare white people are here. In Nairobi I hear they're common, but here in Kakamega they are rare. I've learned over the past 20 months to stay away. The white people you meet out here (who aren't peace corps) are exceptionally rare. Most of them are missionaries. I haven't seen any Book of Mormon types, but I'm looking! Lots of the missionaries dress and act normally. That is until they open their mouths. Their countenances exudes a disquieting positivity. (What a pretentious sentence.) If they start to talk to you run! Get out! Disengage. One time some smelly German missionaries came to my school. We interrupted our schedule to hear them preach (ramble) to our students. They rambled on and on about how hunger is good because hunger for food leads to hunger for God and God will nurture you and end your hunger blah blah blah. Then they had the gaul to ask our students for a tithe or "something small" as they called it. Many of our students didn't have money but those who did forked up ten or twenty shillings. These missionaries couldn't have collected more than \$10. What was the point of that? Also, did I mention they stunk! I guess anti perspirant deodorant hasn't made its way to Deutschland yet. Maybe they should take a page out of the Muslims book and be clean before they pray. I hope they used those \$10 and invest in deodorant.

Fat Man from Florida

I went to a supermarket in Kakamega on Sunday to buy groceries for the week. In my peripherals I notice a large white whale alla Moby Dick shopping with two young Orcas. This large specimen is talking loudly explaining the correct brand of peanut butter they need to purchase.

"Now girls every time we make a purchase there's many factors to consider"

He has a slightly southern draw, but not an obnoxious accent. He's talking loud definitely an American.

"The two most important factors I consider are: number 1: price and number 2: the ingredients list. Girls do not pay attention to the packaging that's always a marketing trick from the company that made the product. When we consider price you can't just look at the sticker price you must look at the rate. The price per gram that's how you get the best deals. But also we must look at the ingredients list. We are not buying peanut butter with added sugar! Mommy and I are on a diet so you are too." (The children are not yet fat.)

He prattles on as the children look longingly towards the toy aisle.

I swerve to avoid him ducking into the next aisle. It's filled with herbal tea. I don't need any of that crap. His voice grows faint and I can finally do my peanut butter shopping.

Later on I'm comparing different soy sauce brands and the big man passes me. He's blathering on about all the different "ethnic" food you can buy in this supermarket. I pretend to be reading the ingredients in a soy sauce bottle. He cuts his monologue short, and I feel him staring at me. After a moment the monologue resumes and he walks to the checkout with his two mixed daughters. Phew he's out of here I think. After another 15 minutes of shopping I check out and walk out of the store. I head to the main road to catch a tuktuk. In the parking lot I hear:

"Hey buddy! Are you lost?"

Oh no it's him. We lock eyes. He looks like the Simpson's comic book guy sans ponytail.

"Nope!" I continue to walk to the main road.

"Hey! Wait up man I want you to meet my daughter." He's sitting on the driver's side in a Grey Toyota Voxy minivan. It's funny how some cars perfectly resemble their owners I think.

"Okay." I say

His daughter is in the back munching on a king-size candy bar. Pretty sure that has a lot of added sugar I think to myself. Me and his daughter "gota," which means "fist bump" in

Swahili. He explains that the other girl is his niece, and he tells me where he lives. I've never heard of it.

"And where do you live?"

"Lubao"

"Oh! That's right by me! Hop in I'll give you a ride."

"Okay."

...
"...So yea I've been here for oh I don't know 7 or 8 years. Yep gotta me a Kenyan wife and we live here now. Yep Kenya is my country I'm about to get my citizenship. I've been to 12 different African countries and Kenya is the best! It's the most developed but anyway I'm a contractor right now in between contracts so I'm at my home here in Kakamega. I have a side business a restaurant! We make real American Pizza and real southern cooking nothing Kenya is on the menu! Business is good we have no competitors it's just a question of labor. Finding good workers is really hard here. Especially when you're doing restaurant margins... but yea in between contracts should be heading up to Tunisia in a few months for a radio communications contract. I guess you could say I'm an IT wiz kid."

"OH IT where did you go to school? I studied computer sci-"

"School! You don't need school! Well you do need high school of course but no college! Do not tell me you went to college for all four years."

"Ummm 3 and a half I graduated early."

"Good! That's still 3 and a half too many in my book but at least you saved yourself a semester."

"Yea I gue-"

"Bill Gates! Steve Jobs! Mark Zuckerberger! All Billionaires. And none of them went to college."

"Oh yea I didn't realize that."

We pull in to a gas station.

"Filler up here's 2,000 shillings." He stares the attendant down as he continues speaking to me.

"You have to be careful here. This country is filled with tricksters. Especially when they see two white guys in a car you know they're itching to steal from us."

"Oh. I Have not thought of that."

"Yep always itching to make a quick buck. These people are very slick. You always gotta be aware of your surroundings."

"Yea"

We pull out of the gas station.

"So where was I?"

"Hey I never got your name."

"It's Chris and your's?"

"Well nice to meet you Trevor. Where was I again?"

"What state are you from?"

"Ahhh yea can you tell? South Carolina. Well born in South Carolina but moved to Florida when I was about ten. Lived in Florida for quite some time. Graduated from high school down there and then worked at a Hardees for a few years. Made it all the way up to manager in just one year! Can you believe that. The franchise owner said I was one tough worker and that I was the fastest person to achieve the manager level that he had ever seen! Well after I mastered food service managing I had to move on to something else. So I got a job in It. This was the early 2000s so it was pretty easy to get an IT job. You just needed to act like you knew what you were talking about and bingo! You're in. Only I actually knew what I was talking about. I'm a garage tinkerer. Built my own computer. Built a radio receiver from scratch. Took apart and reassembled a microphone. You know. That sort of stuff. Well, anyway got that job and got married yep. Can you believe that. Was married to my last wife for ten years. She had two kids before me but that guy was a dead beat. Never payed for anything. In and out of prison the whole deal. You know. I helped raised those kids and even thought of them as my

own. We tried for some of our own but it never worked out. Maybe she was too old. She did say something happened to her after her second birth, but I don't remember what. I'm not really a doctor person. Well she was older than me you know. Anyway I helped raise those kids and all. They went off to college then BAM! Turns out she was cheating on me! Had started cheating on me during our last year of marriage. And I said that's it filed for divorce and all. Completely cut her off. Decided to apply to some of these IT Radio communication contracts. Out in Africa. I got lucky enough to score one and well here I am. Lived in Nairobi for a bit and met my wife and we decided to buy some land in her ancestral home here in Kakamega. Oh man African woman are different. Much better than Americans! Believe me brother. I won't get into all of it with the kids in the car but trust me!"

"Ummm okay"

"So yea trust me it was love at first site we married in 6 months and immediately got to having kids hoping for a few more! We're definitely trying. Well anyway where was I? Yea that's right the whole IT contracts. So had that contract for six months and ever since then I have been bouncing around the continent doing IT consultancy mostly in the radio communication space. It's a pretty good gig you just gotta know the right people to contact. I usually leave here for about 2 to 3 months at a time. And my wife is faithful! Believe me we talk all the time when I'm away and she would never cheat on me like that last one did!"

"Oh that's good."

"Yep that's the beauty of Africa. Everyone is so faithful here. I think it has something to do with how religious people are. Not that we go to church that often. Also, I hate to say it but as a white guy you're treated like a king here. In America nobody gave a shit about me I was totally insignificant, but here I'm practically royalty. They alway roll out the red carpet for us and service is always excellent. White privilege really works to your advantage here unlike in America. In America it's the opposite! Sure people always ask for money from me here, but they do that in America to! I don't know what state your from but in Florida the bums are always panhandling for something give me money for food, water, etc. When we all know they're just gonna spend it on drugs! Look I like drinking as much as the next guy. Also, wee should totally be legal, but these bums scrounge together a little change and they immediately go buy heroin or fent or crack or whatever they have over there now. The bums all know that the US government will give them money like candy, but they are simply too lazy to go to the welfare office and pick up their check. It's a sorry state of affairs when a minimum wage worker is making less money than a homeless guy ins't it?"

"Ummm I think workers make more than-"

"Nope nope nope don't want to hear it. It's simply laziness that's it. What state are you from again?"

"New York, but I went to college in California" that was dumb why did I add that?

"You're from New York and California! And you went to college? Man you must be a fucking communist or socialist or whatever. Look I won't pry, but what hare you? And do not tell me you have a fucking Che Guevera shirt you know that guy killed more fags than Hitler?"

"Oh, I didn't know about those statistics. I guess you can say right in the middle. I try not to pay attention to it too much."

"Okay buddy if you say so just look at history and let me know what you find! Also, if you want real news like real news look up [InfoWars.com](#) trust me Alex Jones has been 100% right about everything. Maybe a stray detail he gets wrong here or there, but his overarching narrative is right on the money. Look it up he'll open your eyes. You might have seen him before on the Joe Rogan podcast he did a couple episodes."

"Thanks I'll have to check it out. Oh look we're in Lubao. This is my stop."

"Well I can drive to your house."

"No that's okay I can walk I have some people I need to see in the village before I get home."

"Gotcha! Well it was great meeting you. Definitely marry a Kenyan woman I can't recommend it enough. Also, you need to come to my restaurant in Kakamega here let's exchange numbers."

We exchange WhatsApp details. Then the fat white man cruises away in his mini van. I haven't seen him since.

The Gruesome Threesome: Trevor, Mark, and Michael



Side Trip to Zanzibar:

My parents, cousins, and sister came out again for another trip in August. This time we went to the lovely island: Zanzibar. If you want to take a dip in the Indian Ocean or go on a trip to Africa. Tanzania is the country for you. Everything in Tanzania is cheaper, calmer, and more organized than Kenya. We went snorkeling, spelunking, saw big turtles, saw euro trash rocking cornrows, and ate Italian food Bon APPETITE! For our last night we had a traditional Zanzibar roof top dinner where you sit shoeless on rugs and cushions. Zanzibar is 98% muslim and during this dinner we heard the Maghrib and Isha Call to Prayers. It was very powerful. Fortunately, business is king and we could still order beers on this muslim majority island. Zanzibar is the best! (Also, I got a tremendous souvenir: Tanzanian Donald Trump Stamps)



Handing-off my site to a new volunteer.

Fortunately, my site is getting a replacement volunteer here's a photo of us together. Her name is Hazel and she will be teaching the same subjects that I taught. Math and Computers. This past week we've been going through the same rigmarole that I went through when I first got here. Catholic mass, lunching with village elders, interminable meetings. On Saturday we had lunch with the Vice Chairman of our school's board of Ed. His name is Prof. Shinyalu and he received his PhD in Environmental Ecology from UC Berkeley. GO BEARS! He reminisced about his undergraduate days and had a few interesting takes on world affairs. Here they are for your edification.



"Back in undergraduate we had so much fun. Yes all the prostitutes knew the day we got payed and they would come out that actually reminds me one night we heard our friend shout 'comrades comrades' because that's what our group was called the Comrades. Well we heard him and we all gathered and he was arguing with a prostitute saying 'I have payed her already yet she refuses me' so you know we took her by the legs like this and throw them in a room together shut the door and that was that." His wife was sitting next to him as relayed this story.

"I am so very much praying for World War 3 you the US you must go into Iran and it will become beautiful like Japan and Germany did after that war."

"Hamas is so very much dumb. Judaism you know is the oldest religion it is older than Islam. If you can believe that. You do not go up to your older brother and punch him in the face. If you do that the older brother will come back with a vengeance of course"

"Because the tunnels the tunnels are everywhere they are even there in South Sudan the terrorists they have built tunnels between South Sudan and Kenya. Just like they have between Gaza and the West Bank I mean that tunnel where did all the dirt go for that tunnel? They hid it because they are very smart people."

"I don't like Trump. Trump is a bad racist if he was a good racist that would be another story but he is a bad one. The good ones I don't have a problem with the good ones. It's the bad ones I don't like."

Other New Volunteers

This is Abe and Megan two new volunteers who are friends of friends. Small world! Abe is friends with my friend from the Lair Whitney and Megan went to the same Highschool as my friend from college Claire. SMALL WORLD! They both read some of my earlier newsletters before arriving in Kenya and now I am helping with their training. I wish them GREAT SUCCESS! In the next two years!



Leaving my Kenyan Village.



Fin:

That's it. Peace Corps service over. We have our school's closing ceremony I make a tremendous speech. Then a Peace Corps helicopter, piloted by the man in the picture below, comes and lowers a cable to me. I clip my "Not For Climbing" carabiner to the cable and there I go up up and away. My Kenyan students shout: "Teacher Trevor we Love you!" "I know." I mouth in reply. "Mr. Cox when will you come back?" I say nothing and give them a salute as I am whisked away by the black government helicopter. Cue the closing song: Rebel Rebel by David Bowie. The black helicopter flies over lake Victoria and I dump my sidearm and identity cards into the water. The shot fades to black and the end credits scroll begins.



JFK → LHR	5555 km
LHR → NBO	6828 km
NBO → KIS	280 km
KIS → NBO	280 km
NBO → ZNZ	599 km
ZNZ → NBO	599 km
NBO → ADD	1157 km
ADD → BKK	6766 km
BKK → HKG	1689 km
HKG → HND	2904 km
HND → HRSM	679 km
HRSM → FUK	208 km
FUK → HND	883 km
HND → SEA	7731 km
SEA → JFK	3897 km
JFK → SFO	4162 km
SFO → JFK	4162 km

Epilogue: (Cue Walk Like an Egyptian by the Bangels #iykyk)

The credits are over this is the post credits scene. Back in December I went home for Christmas. When I returned to Kenya via Heathrow I extended my layover in London by a week and enjoyed the town with my Dad. I had to investigate what those old colonizers were up to. We watched the world championship of darts, saw paintings, and walked through an interminable dreary drizzle. Now I understand what Morrissey is bitching about on all his albums. (I imagine Manchester is worse.) I'll be leaving Kenya November 9th heading East for Hong Kong via layovers in Ethiopia and Bangkok. Then Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka Japan. (Fukuoka has sumo in November!) Then back to JFK via Seattle to complete my 2024 circumnavigation. I'll be back in New York for Thanksgiving and the bay area in the middle of December. If you're around hit me up. Peace Out. COX OUT.

Total \approx 48,379 km
or \approx 30,000 miles



Appendix All the books I've read in Peace Corps

Contemporary Fiction (meaning the author is still alive)

Authors	Title	Thoughts
Fredrik Backman	A Man Called Ove: A Novel	Laugh out loud funny and cry out loud sad
Paul Beatty	The Sellout	Laugh out loud funny. Satire of race relations. Best joke is woke intellectuals using "Empower Point" instead of power point. Haven't laughed this much during a book since reading Norm Macdonald's Autobiography.
Joshua Cohen	The Netanyahus: An Account of a Minor and Ultimately Even Negligible Episode in the History of a Very Famous Family	Loled. Funny Jewish novel. Great tale of Benzion Netanyahu
Michel Houellebecq	Submission	Right wing novel about French Politics. Made me feel like I shouldn't be reading it, but it was enjoyable.
Kazuo Ishiguro	The Remains of the Day	Perfect
Christian Jungersen	The Exception	Hilarious office politics between 4 women.
Charlie Kaufman	Antkind: A Novel	Beginning is funny but it tapers off. Def shouldn't be as long as it is.
Tao Lin	Shoplifting From American Apparel	Written by an autistic person and it reads like it.
Mario Vargas Llosa	Death in the Andes	Eh it was okay maybe I was distracted when reading it or the translation was bad? Might need to re-read.
Ottessa Moshfegh	My Year of Rest and Relaxation	Great novel about addiction.
Ryu Murakami	Piercing	Enthralling
Ryu Murakami	In the Miso Soup	Very enthralling couldn't put it down. Mesmerizing.
Ryu Murakami	Audition	Als mesmerizing I wish more of his stuff was translated to English.
Viet Thanh Nguyen	The Sympathizer	It was okay but a bit eye rolling at times.
Tommy Orange	There There: A novel	Thought it would be more woke, but it wasn't really great how he weaves together a bunch of narrative at the end.
Ahmed Saadawi	Frankenstein in Baghdad	It was okay might be a translation problem.

Authors	Title	Thoughts
Donna Tattt	The Secret History	Beautiful prose.
Amor Towles	A Gentleman in Moscow	Perfect little digestible story. Inspired me to read War and Peace
Mo Yan	The Republic of Wine	Amazing loved it. Might be the best novel I've read by a Nobel laureate.

With Senior girl computer students



With Senior boy computer students



Classic Fiction (meaning the author is dead)

Author	Title	Thoughts
Edward Abbey	Black Sun	It was okay more of a love story/romance novel than a murder mystery as I thought it was going to be. Also, clearly the inspiration for the video game Firewatch.
Roberto Bolaño	Nazi Literature in the Americas	Good but a little too staccato to me.
Roberto Bolaño	The Savage Detectives	Mesmerizing. More raunch than I thought it was going to be . My first Bolaño novel.
Roberto Bolaño	By Night in Chile	Eerie unsettling novel about the Pinochet regime. I think I just found my new favorite author. Too bad he's dead.
Roberto Bolaño	2666	His best. It's giant the 5 stories weave together wonderfully. Book 4 gets a little tiresome with all the descriptions of death, but that's the point.
John le Carré	The Spy Who Came in from the Cold	It was okay his books for me seem to be better as movies than as novels.
Louis Ferdinand Céline	Journey to the End of the Night	Brutal. Like Heart of Darkness, but actually depressing. The scenes of French colonialism and caring for poor people as a doctor will stay with me forever.
Miguel de Cervantes	Don Quixote [Trans. by Edith Grossman]	A classic but too long. Funnier than I thought and the translator did a great job of making Don Quixote talk Shakespearean while the rest of the characters speak contemporary English.
Joseph Conrad	The Secret Agent	It was good, but a little confusing at times. Maybe need to re-read.
Philip K. Dick	A Scanner Darkly	It was okay, but at times confusing. Dick is great with generating concepts, but his writing isn't always the best. I guess that's what happens when you write hundreds of thousands of words on speed.
Ford Madox Ford	The Good Soldier	A great critique of Victorian relationships and untrustworthy narrators.
Carlos Ruiz Zafón	The Shadow of the Wind	It was good, but too long.
Graham Greene	Our Man in Havana	Great. Laugh out loud funny.
Graham Greene	Monsignor Quixote	Also great. Classic Greene, but he has better novels.
Knut Hamsun	Hunger	Really gets you in the head of a crazy homeless person.
Joseph Heller	Something Happened	Great. Maybe too long. You could write a comparison paper with this and Sometimes a Great Notion. Analyzing masculinity in the 1970s
E.T.A. Hoffmann	The Sandman	Beautiful Gothic Short Story

Author	Title	Thoughts
Italo Calvino	Invisible Cities	Wonderful Imagery. I couldn't get through If on A Winter's Night a Traveler, but this was much better. The imagery is reminiscent of Robert Hunter Grateful Dead songs. I couldn't get some of the scenes out of my head.
Henry James	The Turn of the Screw	Gothic short horror story
Ken Kesey	Sometimes a Great Notion	Like said earlier great stream of consciousness 1970s novel. Gotta totally isolate yourself and be caffeinated to get through certain parts, but it'll stay with you.
Thomas Mann	The Magic Mountain	Hmmm probably the best novel I've read during my service it's either this or War and Peace, but it's so good. Philosophical, political-critique, comedy, analyzing time. Just perfect and worth the length.
Thomas Mann	Death in Venice	Hilarious short story. Who amongst us hasn't been obsessed with somebody who doesn't know you exist.
Gabriel García Márquez	One Hundred Years of Solitude	Terrible. The worst book I've read during my service. Wouldn't have DNF'd but forced myself to finish because of its reputation and I hated it.
Cormac McCarthy	Blood Meridian	Great. Depressing. Need a breather and a break from reading for a week after finishing it.
Herman Melville	Typee	Awesome reads like contemporary fiction.
Herman Melville	Bartleby the Scrivener	Laugh out loud funny. I'd put it just behind Moby Dick.
Herman Melville	Billy Budd	Read because of the Sopranos. Billy Budd is def gay.
Yukio Mishima	The Temple of the Golden Pavilion	Currently reading.
Yukio Mishima	Confessions of a Mask	Gay and at times hilarious coming of age book. Mishima is mesmerizing.
Edgar Mittelholzer	My Bones and My Flute	Might be the best gothic horror book I've read
Vladimir Nabokov	Lolita	Amazing, obviously it's Nabokov. His diction is 10/10. But it's clearly written for girls. As Cormac McCarthy is to dick lit Lolita is to Chick lit.
Gloria Naylor	1996. A novel	Great short novel about schizophrenia. You really get into the head space of a crazy person.
Philip Roth	Portnoy's Complaint	Overrated at the time I'm sure it was ground breaking, but better Jewish novels have been written since. Like Woody Allen's Apropos of Nothing, Cohen's the Netanyahus, and Kaufman's Antkind.

Author	Title	Thoughts
Charles Portis	Masters of Atlantis	Eh forgettable. It's supposed to be funny and the first two chapters were, but maybe his other novels are better.
Mary Shelley	Frankenstein	Read because of Ramble on Rose by the Grateful Dead. Not like the regular descriptions. Basically Frankenstein's monster just wants some pussy, and he doesn't get it and he starts killing people. He might be the first incel tbh.
John Steinbeck	East of Eden	Amazing imagery of California and family saga.
John Steinbeck	The Grapes of Wrath	Also great, I still think Cannery Row is my fav Steinbeck, but these two are tied for second. I guess I'd give East of Eden the edge? Idk.
Bram Stoker	Dracula	Great Gothic horror story.
Leo Tolstoy	War And Peace	Amazing novel. Only issue is Tolstoy's philosophical chapters. One here and there isn't bad, but the second epilogue is all philosophical and leaves a bad taste in your mouth. Dostoyevsky is great in your youth, but past 25 you realize Tolstoy is really the greatest Russian author. Also, more readable than you think because each chapter is ~4 pages. If anything it should be longer.
John Williams	Stoner	A great Campus novel. I wish I read it in undergraduate. Would be good to read in tandem with Isherwood's A Single Man. Or parts of Steinbeck's East of Eden.
Stefan Zweig	The World of Yesterday	I guess it's a memoir but reads like fiction. Perfectly written even in translation. It just reminds me of Wes Anderson
Stefan Zweig	Chess Story	Again a perfect short story. Reminds me of Wes Anderson.



With my Sophomore Math Students

Non Fiction: Travelogue (aka reads like memoir or fiction)

Author	Title	Thoughts
Mark Adams	Meet Me in Atlantis My Obsessive Quest to Find the Sunken City	Great. Feels like a Toilet Read.
Arthur Chichester	The Burning Edge	Belorussia travelogue by a controversial youtuber.
Ted Conover	Rolling Nowhere	Eh, I only liked it because I hated the author so much. He's only on trains for a few weeks and is already bitching. Paints himself as if he's the only good white guy, but comes off as ridiculous. All he cares about is getting pussy and that part is funny.
Daniel Everett	Don't Sleep, There are Snakes	Great novel about living with an Amazon tribe, but when he starts to talk about linguistics he loses me. Made me read linguistics wikipedia pages and I think Chomsky is more correct than Everett when it comes to that shit. Also, too much pro cultural relativism bs
Tony Horwitz	Confederates in the Attic	Funny travelogue about a Jewish man going through Dixie. If anything it's a bit long would have been perfect at 300 pages instead of 430 pages and chapters no more than 25 pages long.
Daniel Kalder	Lost Cosmonaut	Amazing travel book through Russian states. He only has three books and I wish he had more
Daniel Kalder	Strange Telescopes	Another Russia travel book but about oddities and characters in Moscow and St. Petersburg.
Ryszard Kapuscinski	Imperium	Similar to Lost Cosmonaut but about 10 years earlier and mostly focused on the Caucasuses.
Ryszard Kapuscinski	Another Day of Life	Great accounting of the Portuguese pull out from Angola.
Ryszard Kapuscinski	Shah of Shahs	Great accounting of the fall of the Shah. I think it's my second favorite of his and the best I read during service. Give you a good idea of the Ayatollah's appeal
Ryzard Kapuscinski	The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat	Another ridiculous African dictator. Remind me of Sacha Baron Cohens movie.
William T. Vollmann	An Afghanistan Picture Show: Or, How I Saved the World	Hilarious account of a rich out of shape American trying to help the Taliban against the Russians. Is the comedic counterpoint to Adam Curtis's Serious Documentary Bitter Lake.
William T. Vollmann	The Atlas	Had the makings of a good book, but the dude is just too obsessed with fucking prostitutes.
William T. Vollmann	Into the Forbidden Zone	Great short account of the aftermath of the Fukushima meltdown.

Author	Title	Thoughts
William T. Vollmann	Riding Toward Everywhere	Better train hopping/hobo book than Ted Conover's



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With Junior Computer Students

Non Fiction: Other (aka random collection of history and schizo books. We Love!)

Author	Title	Thoughts
John Allegro	The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross	Read this because of Joe Rogan. Schizo book about the founding of Christianity. It was okay and he gets very in the weeds when it comes to ancient dead languages beyond greek and Latin. Apparently his etymology arguments have been disproven and duh. I doubt there are 200 different words for Penis in Aramaic and Akkadian.
Nicholson Baker	Baseless: My Search for Secrets in the Ruins of the Freedom of Information Act	Read it because I loved his short novel the Mezzanine. He's a talented writer and I liked the daily blog style. Ultimately doesn't discover anything, but gets you thinking why wouldn't the us fuck around with bio weapon in Korea? Maybe we did. He doesn't know and you don't know.
Russ Baker	Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government, and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years	Eh too long and conspiratorial. Obviously this guy hates the bushes, but not everything they did turns to shit. Saying poppy bushed crashed his plane during WW2 on purpose is ridiculous. I should have just read the Watergate parts, which leaves you with a new view of what and why that stuff actually went down. All the rest eh.
John Barton	A History of the Bible: The Story of the World's Most Influential Book	Great novel about how the Bible was constructed and came to be in its current form for both its old and new testament. Read it in tandem with the Bible.
Edwin Black	War Against the Weak	Interesting history of eugenics in the USA
Iris Chang	The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II	Very depressing and horrible book about Japanese war crimes. I can't wait to read about the counterarguments when I'm in Japan.
Donnie Eichar	Dead Mountain: The True Story of the Dyatlov Pass Incident	Eh it was okay. Russians go hiking in winter and they die big whoop. I think the mystery spooky aspects are overblown.
Michel Foucault	The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction:	Eh. He's simultaneously a brilliant write and a terrible writer. Like there's moments of brilliance buried beneath pretentious turgid crap. Maybe it's better in French, but his arguments, in general, seem reaching and are unconvincing.
Barbara Frale	The Templars	It's okay only read it because Umberto Eco wrote the introduction. Templars were just the first frat boys. They had an initiation ritual where you kiss a current templar on the but. Lol that's super frat. They didn't secretly control shit. Well maybe they controlled parties and access to bitches just like frats.

Author	Title	Thoughts
Stefanos Geroulanos	The Invention of Prehistory	It was okay and somewhat interesting. I liked his critique of Yuval Noah Hararah and Jordan Peterson. Too bad not many people will be reading it.
Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke	The Western Esoteric Traditions:A Historical Introduction	Eh would have been more enjoyable read in tandem with a college class. At times it was very dry.
David Graeber	Debt	Interesting argument about Debt but in general too long.
David Grann	The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder	Great David Grann is amazing.
David Grann	The White Darkness	Don't really remember it boring and white just like the scenes it describes.
Robert L Heilbroner	The Worldly Philosophers: The Great Economic Thinkers	A beautiful romp through great economic thinkers. His writing reminds me of Stefan Zweig and it was immensely readable. I've wanted to read this books ever since I saw it in the college bookstore during undergraduate. I thought it would be dry and boring, but it wasn't it was great.
Gordon Mathews	Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong	Great little book about Hong Kong's most interesting building. I can't wait to see it in person.
Brian C. Muraresku	The Immortality Key: The Secret History of the Religion With No Name	It was okay, but some of his arguments were lacking. I liked the adventure travelogue parts, but his
John Julius Norwich	Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy	Great history of the papacy and impressive how much time it covers in so few pages. I didn't know there was a time when there was three popes. Some popes are truly demonic. I really enjoyed it, but would probably be better paired with a college class or read in tandem with a history class to get more info about a certain Pope rather than reading it cover to cover as I did.
Wendy S. Painting	Aberration in the Heartland of the Real	Great Schizo book about the Oklahoma city Bombing. There's a 12 hour podcast she does about the same topic, which was also great. I don't think this ~1,000 page book gave me any more details that weren't in that podcast so sort of a waste, but it was enjoyable. She mentions a second book in her introduction I hope she gets around to publishing that.
Michael Parenti	Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and Overthrow of Communism	An interesting book by a pinko apologist. Okay yes soviet Russia did bring people out of poverty and yes secret police did exist in Tsarist times, but in the capitalist West I can have Sushi and watch Curb Your Enthusiasm. The soviet answer to that is borsch, vodka, and depression. No thanks!

Author	Title	Thoughts
Nathaniel Philbrick	In the Heart of the Sea	Another boat another shipwreck, but this time cannibalism. I think it was written better than David Grann's
Gerald Posner	God's Bankers: A History of Money and Power at the Vatican	Great novel about the Vatican bank and all the scandal that have plagued it over the 20th century. A story that is still unfolding about the wealthiest institution.
Dava Sobel	Longitude	It was short thank god. This could have been a long New Yorker article. Definitely not enough for a full fledged book.
Esmé Weijun Wang	The Collected Schizophrenias	Another great book written by a schizophrenic really gets you in her mind and shows you a way out of having crazy thoughts even though there is never truly a way out. She hasn't had an episode in about a decade and seems recovered. She's also a wonderful writer.
Paul Williams	Operation Gladio: the Unholy Alliance between the Vatican, the CIA, and the Mafia	A classic Schizo novel that ultimately wasn't that memorable. God's banker is much better.
Simon Winchester	The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary	Great and hilarious story about a Madman who thinks evil Irish people are out to get him. It was written averagely would have been better by another non fiction writer.
Howard Zinn	People's History of the United States, A (P.S.)	Eh. This is basically the AP US history textbook so much of it was earth shattering for me. It just reads as a review of my 11th grade class. I'm sure it was ground-breaking when it was published, but at this point this is the established record of American history.



With Sophomore Computer Students

Using my ebook organizer, Calibre, I extracted the page count of the books above it totals: 43,298 pages. Now some of that is fluff, notes, bibliography, etc. But I have not added the pages of the Bible to that total so I'll just use that number as is. I have been in Kenya approximately 2 years so that is 730 days. For a daily average of about 59 pages. Neat!

Religious Books

The Bible by Various Authors or God?

I've read every book in the Bible except of Psalms. I read the major Psalms, but couldn't get through translated ancient poetry. All in all glad I did it, but it's so long. Half of Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers is funny because God is just a bitchy wedding planner giving Jews all of these rules they need to follow. I mean so much of it is the exact dimensions and materials that they need to use to construct the temple.

Judges good but repetitive

Ecclesiastes is the perfect book. It's short and existential really enjoyed it.

Song of Solomon was very horny. Boner alert!

New Testament.

The gospels are great, but repetitive my ranking: John, Luke, Mathew, and Mark. Mark is literally trash. Very little of it is unique and it's written for morons. John is the best because it gets a little mystical. Then the letters or epistles. Most of them suck and make Christianity way more crazy than it seems like Jesus intended. The letters really show that it is the religion of Paul, and Paul is nuts. Also, Jesus is crazy, but not as crazy as Paul. In one of the Gospels, I can't remember which, Jesus literally says you don't need to wash your hands before you eat that's a Jewish thing. If you believe in god you do not need to wash your hands because god will make anything that enters your body pure lol.

John the Baptist is cool and wild hippie honestly most of the New Testament is big hippie vibes. I wish there was more stuff on John the Baptist.

Revelations is the best book in the New Testament. It's badass and metal. The imagery is super dope. Death Grips vibes. Revelations is more hardcore than Dante's Inferno. It's so good.

Also read 1/3rd of the Quran, but I had to drop it after a translation error that I couldn't get out of my head. Basically Muhammed used corn in an analogy, but corn didn't exist in the Arabian peninsula until the time of Columbus. Over 800 years after Muhammed's time. I couldn't get this error out of my head and had to put it down. Maybe another time. It is very short!

Manga:

Also read the entirety of Bleach, Hunter X Hunter, the Original Dragon ball, and JoJo's Bizarre Adventure up to Part 7. But I won't get into that weeb shit here. Also played hella video games in my second year after getting a Switch so my reading went down. **RIP.**



With the exiting Seniors. Good luck on your exams!