



Newsletter: March 2009 Douglas McFalls

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## I'M COMING TO AMERICA IN JUNE

After nearly 20 months (with a short blip in Boston last March) I'm coming home! My father's memorial service is scheduled for July 4<sup>th</sup> in Vermont (he passed away last September). Because it's been a long time, and it's a pricy trip, I decided to spend the month of June in the U.S. visiting friends & supporters, eating all I can, and sharing as much as I can (formally and informally) about all the developments here. I look forward to seeing many of you, catching up on what you have been up to as well. Please pencil me in your stereotypically busy American calendars. I start my "tour" June 3 - 11 in Seattle [I am trying to plan a reception on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>; and I'm presenting at University Pres. Church on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. & 7 p.m. I'll take the train to San Fran, then across to Chicago, NYC, and Boston before joining my family in Vermont on the 28th. I look forward to seeing many of you. My number will be – 206.227.0082 (here it is +255.784.491471 – we are currently 10 hours ahead.) – See you soon!

**Coconut Shell Workshop:** Ever wonder what to do with all those left over coconut shell? After waiting more than a year for the funding to come through, I finally launched the Coconut Product Exploration Workshop in January. With painter, carvers, basket weaver and tailors we brainstormed and concocted all sorts of product ideas: Wall faces, wee fishing boats, stuffed turtles with zipper pouch bellies, minimalist picture stands, puppets, mobiles, napkin holders and more. On April 23 we will showcase the fruits of our efforts at the Mawazo Art Gallery in Dar es Salaam. Eight artisans, Philipo (ADEA's co-director), and I will travel to Dar to host this event, asking the guest to help select the most promising new products for our wholesale catalogue and shop.





**Budgeting:** You work hard. You do have a living wage, but at the end of the month, where did all the money go? The artisans here are asking the same question. They are earning more shillings than ever, but some still feel they don't have any money. It all seems to vanish so quickly. In March's monthly meeting we considered these questions: What are their dreams? What are they earning? And, Where is the money going and so they can't fulfill their dreams? Together we listed those things in their life that require money: food, rent, school fees, medicine, water, loans, etc...some items straddled necessity vs. pleasure: clothes and mobile phones. Then the pure pleasure items: Soda, batteries for the radio, cigarettes, women on the side (really, we talked about the additional cost involved in that too), and so on. It was interesting. When asked how much people spent a month on mobile phones. Very few knew. One mama said, "20,000 Tanzanian shillings a month" (about \$18). I asked, "What is that over 12 months? A few said, "120,000 Tsh". I said NO! It's 240,000 Tsh! – enough to re-roof their homes with metal sheets! They were shocked. So the challenge is now on to document every shilling they spend for April then report back in May!

**Drawing the Line:** One great thing about being fed up is you are less moved by pleading stories and "Nisamehe"(forgive me), I'll remember next time". I've reached that point. With so much abuse of the payment system of compensation and loans, and failed attention to order details - we're dropping the ax. This is very good, and very hard. Last week one of our carvers made the 2 hour – 4,000/= Tsh (\$3.50) trip to the office the day AFTER our Tuesday order receipt day. He said he wasn't feeling well, and that he missed the other carvers who came on Tuesday. But this story is all too normal. So we said he'd have to wait. Sadly, his choice will likely leave his family without money for the rest of the week. He left furious, I left grieved but also glad. Last month, one of our painters needed a loan to send a sick cousin to another town's hospital. However, he had an outstanding loan of 7,000 shillings. The 2009 policy is: one loan a month, and no loans outstanding. He had one; we said no. So he chose to work the entire weekend, and by Tuesday he produced enough to pay off his loan, and take a new one.



**MaKuYa 2009 is official on!** We finally received confirmation from the Swiss, Finns and Germans to launch the second annual MaKuYa Traditional Culture and Performing Arts Festival in Mtwara, Tanzania. Last year was a huge success with over 360 performers and 2000+ visitors. Though we are still waiting for other donors, what has been committed is enough to make it happen.

MAKUYA 2009 – AUGUST 14, 15 & 16

*[MaKuYaFestival.blogspot.com](http://MaKuYaFestival.blogspot.com) & September 2008 Newsletter for more information*





**Tanks at Blowout Prices:** About a month ago I got a text message from Tipape Loomu, the director of our Maasai Boma Schools in Rombo, Kenya. A water project in Rombo was selling tanks at quarter of their normal price! “Can we afford one for our school at Esukuta?” Though funds are tight with \$500+ required monthly for running costs, for only \$368 the school and the community will have 15,000 liters of safe and available water collected from a pipeline and rainwater (when there rain), so we bought it and it is now being installed. Tipape’s family, who always graciously hosts me and my guests also have received a 1000 liter tank through the gift of my friend Pam Hathaway who recently visited and is beginning to source support for more water projects for this project.



**Plans To Move Aborted:** I have lived in my office for the past five years here in Mtwara, Tanzania. I was OK with that for a long while because, well, I had no other reason to be here than to work. Since 2003, however, my living room became an office and meeting room, and my dining area became a second shop. My minute side garden has become a place for carvers to work, and my guest room has been come home to Kiluku, the new MaKuYa. I was feeling cramped and missed my privacy. So, I a house hunting I went - with a miniscule budget. I vied for two abandoned



houses on the beach, which I offered to make habitable in exchange for two years rent; no go. There was a nice house, furnished, security, and all utilities; \$450 a month. Ouch! Way over my budget. Went to a nicer “local” house, but seeing my skin color they asked an absurd 400,000 Tsh (about \$350) a month without utilities or security! Finally, I found a place. A cute house



built by the English for the now vanished railway line. It had charm even if the toilet was still outside. I talked the owner down to 100,000 Tsh (still above the price of a comparable places). But then, the delay. My schedule began to fill up, and I began to weigh the financial and time cost involved in making this house into a place I’d be happy, and remembering the likelihood I’d be with the Maasai in Kenya more next year). So I pulled the plug on the deal and immediately began to implement some changes and long overdue home improvements. “As I am my witness, this cinder block duplex shall be designer show house!”

THE PICTURES ARE MY FORMER BEDROOM & “LIVING ROOM”  
(WITH HALF A DUGOUT CANOE IN THE CORNER)

I will wind up here. I am doing great these day! Loving my work and making a lot of progress! So many (too many) project and program ideas. Big challenge is still keeping my cool when workers fail to remember yesterdays lessons when learning today’s. It always seems we’re stuck in Business 101.

**Spiritual note:** I’m learning to put my art into everything I do. Example: the seventy two page MaKuYa festival 2008 accounting report submitted to the donors a work of art with photographs and great page layout. Seeing the final product through not only accounting but also artistic eyes, made the mundane such a delight.

Lot’s more I could share, but I’ll leave you with that! See many of you soon!

*Douglas*

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