

Habari zeno!!

How are y'all? We've got some missionaries on the compound from southern America who are always saying "y'all" and I kinda like it ☺. Hope everything is great back home! I've got lots of exciting news to catch you up on!

So this past week I have had my first experience in the Kibera slum. It will be difficult to describe the extent of the poverty, but I will do my best. For a few days it had rained a lot, so walking into Kibera was very muddy. I couldn't believe my eyes when I first entered it. There are thousands of mud buildings with tin roofs all crammed together with tiny walkways in between. The rain does not help their living situations at all, since the walls are all made of mud. There is garbage absolutely everywhere. Since they do not have toilets in their small mud homes, they get rid of waste through "flying toilets"-- which is a plastic bag full of waste that they simply throw out the door into the street or into the small river that is by Kibera. So you can imagine what it was like walking through mud and waste and excess garbage. I also see people washing their hands and feet everyday in the river that is so contaminated with disease. It's just so unbelievable that people live like this. It's no wonder the crime is so high in Nairobi and in Kibera. There are close to a million people that live in this crammed slum.

When I walk to the school with Beka (another girl who teaches with me), small children often follow us and say "Hi, how are you?" (about the only thing they know in English). They are all so precious and have these adorable smiles and I just want to stop and talk to and hug them all!!! There are a lot of people who are unemployed so they hang around in groups. You definitely need to be aware of your surroundings once entering into Kibera. The people are generally very friendly and kind, especially if they know you are a teacher, but you still always need to be on guard. There have been more than enough incidents there!

When I got to the school I didn't know what to think. The school was started by a man named George who began with around 10 students in 2001. It has now grown to over 300 students. They only had a small church building in the slum that they rented and somehow all these students had to fit and learn in it. It goes from standard (grade) 1-7. They were ALL learning in the same one room building!! You can imagine how chaotic that would be!! The noise level was very high! However, just recently they received funds to build another building. This is the "new" building that I am teaching in. It is a long mud building with a tin roof. It has 3 classrooms. Each class room is separated by a mud wall so this helps keep the noise level down. However, there is only one small window in each room. When I first entered I didn't know how I would be able to teach—its incredibly dark and hot. They are small rooms with many children packed in. But I was happy to find out that my eyes get accustomed to the dark, although I still have a hard time seeing the children in the back row. There is a small blackboard at the front. The children sit on wooden benches—no such thing as a desk in this school!!! When they write, they often use eachother's backs as a support. Despite the extreme poverty (which is very evident in their torn and dirty clothes), the children are normal children—they giggle and laugh when I tell funny stories and always have bright smiles on their faces. They are so happy to be taught by a white teacher and watch my every move. I teach standard 5 which is about the level of grade 3. Their curriculum is so random and confusing, so after teaching I usually spend a lot of time preparing lessons and trying to organize things in a more structured way. For instance, right now I am teaching them about nouns, adjectives, verbs etc. and have set it up in an organized way instead of their usual book which randomly jumps from totally different subjects and follows no logical structure. So far, it has been going great. We have done a lot of

creative things together and they love it. One day we were learning about being kind to others and about the Good Samaritan. So I brought in construction paper (which is SUCH a treat to them) and put a few stickers on each page. Then I had them think of someone they knew that was sick or sad and told them to write/colour a nice card for them to cheer them up. They are not used to doing arts or crafty things, so I gave them an example. I said, "For instance, if my mom was sick I would write her a card and say 'Dear Mom, I hope you are feeling better. I love you very much. I am praying for you. Love, Cara'". I wrote that on the chalkboard. However, as they began colouring and writing, I noticed that many of the students were simply copying what I had written on the board, while still addressing it to someone else. One student had a card that said "Dear Father, I hope you are feeling better. I love you very much. I am praying for you. Love Cara". It was sooo adorable!! Many of them were doing that. So I had to again try to explain that they needed to write their own words. Many of them tacked on a few of their own words as well. They thoroughly enjoyed it, however, and so did I!! I already love my class. They are very well behaved and learn quickly! It can be difficult because there are only about 6 English textbooks for my class of 50 students!! So I have to think of innovative ways in which they can all participate and still learn.

The teachers do a very good job of teaching considering their lack of schooling (I have more education than every teacher there!), and are really devoted to helping the school even though they often do not get paid. It's a real sacrifice for them. They are also committed Christians and each grade has a Bible period where they learn different stories. The students can't afford to pay so its free education for them. They also serve some awful looking porridge stuff in the morning and lentils and bean at lunch. This is incredibly helpful because often it is the only meal the children receive all day. They are so grateful with so little.

The thing that really tore my heart was their break or recess. They all go outside and they have this tiny plot of dirt to play in with all the other students. In the middle of Kibera there is not much space, even for a school. They do not have soccer balls or other things to play with. Instead, they go to the garbage pile by the school and fish through it. They find garbage and wrap it up with plastic to make balls. They then kick these around and play soccer or other games. But they have so much fun and are totally satisfied with a piece of garbage as a ball. It definitely reminds me of how often I take the little things for granted.

So I know this is a lot of information and probably hard to still get a picture in your mind. It's difficult for me to write in words my experiences here. I have some other prayer requests that I really encourage you to remember and pray for. One of our Kenyan guards for the compound, Joseph, has a little daughter who was bit by a dog with rabies. Thankfully, money has been provided so that she was able to receive rabies shots, but she still needs a lot of prayer. Also, a Christian radio station was burned down by "Mus..." (I cannot type the whole word for safety reasons, but it's a religious group and I am sure you can figure it out) and two men were killed. Please pray for those who are grieving but also that God will rescue these "Mus..." men and show them the love and peace that is in Christ, rather than violence and hatred. The compound right across from my compound had a serious situation happen this week. As some people were returning to the compound in their car and were just about to enter the compound gates, armed men jumped out and hijacked the car threatening to kill them. Thankfully, no one was hurt. But it just hit close to home and reminded me and many of us on the compound again how much we need to pray for safety and how we always need to be careful. So please remember to keep these things in your prayers.

I will attach some pictures of Kibera. Also, we went to a glass factory where they make beautiful glass and blow it into different shapes, etc. so I attached some pictures from that. Keep in touch! I really enjoy getting emails and hearing updates from your lives. I hope you all have a great week! During worship on Sunday, the Kenyans often begin by saying "God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good".

Love,
Cara

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Ephesians 3:14-21