
Waines World

Christian Health Ambassadors

Christmas 2008

Youth Drama Group Brings Atrocities to Public Attention

In the early Saturday morning hours, in a dusty schoolyard in Ganta, a group of older boys gather, cracking jokes and sharing laughter. Soon a tall, slender young woman shows up. Her name is Bendorah.

Bendorah has been associated with Equip since she was a sponsored high school student back in early 2000. Bendorah has overcome the challenges of growing up in a country where girls face a lot of violence and exploitation and survived to make a difference. Starting a drama group gave her a forum to highlight the atrocities committed here in Liberia and an opportunity to influence change in Liberian society.

Bendorah confidently calls the boys in from their horseplay. Its time to act. Carefully she explains the story that they will dramatize. This is the

true story of Samuel Kotoh .

Samuel Kotoh was a young motorcycle (called Kpen Kpen) taxi driver. Lured by murderers to carry them deep into the bush, he was choked from behind at a strategic location while they were still riding. The trap was set, the collaborators were on site. Samuel fought valiantly but was soon overpowered. *The price of body parts and blood is high.* They killed him, hung up his body on a tree, and then drained his blood, and extracted his vital organs for cannibalistic ritual purposes.

“He used to live just up there.” Bendorah motions with her hand to the neighborhood that surrounds us.

Ritualistic Killings such as this are not made up atrocities. Bendorah’s drama group is tackling a previously silent horror that has effected Liberians for centuries.

In the late 1980’s, there was absolute terror and silence about Poro killings etc. The secret

societies had complete impunity. To speak out and expose them was to be killed.

Victims are neighbors, family members, acquaintances. Mothers did not dare to send their children to school if there was no clear open road, family members dared not speak out against these Poro ritualistic killings for Poro members were also part of their family.

Through Christians acting in solidarity and through the sacrifice of Christian martyrs who have given up their lives standing up against these evil practices, there has been a great breakthrough that has freed people from the grip of absolute terror of speaking out.

The actors don’t use scripts, they know the story well. With my camera in hand, it takes little formation time before, Bendorah yells “Action” and off they go, improvising dialogue and choreographing fight scenes in the moment. Two boys around 12 and a little girl no older than 6 were watching from the sidelines, and they quickly got roped into the drama. Soon everything explodes into a motorbike chase. One of the boy’s pants keep falling down as he ran, and everyone stops and has a good laugh. Perhaps this helps to not reveal the real fear and vulnerability all these children face daily. Back to the drama, there is no humor.

By now more people show up and the group swells to about 20 members.

The next story, took place in 2001. Dave and Audrey were in Ganta at the time and some of their staff were part of the search party to find Wanasaywon, a 9 year old girl who



Bendorah



The Revelation Is Christ ("T-Ric") Drama Group

went missing from Hope Academy. Wanasaywon had been lured, drugged, and then murdered. Her genitals, tongue, and vital organs were all cut from her body.

It was a few days later that a man was hunting for frogs in the swamp. He saw a group of flies hovering over one area and got suspicious. He prodded the area with a long pole, and feeling the rock, he lifted it out. The body came to the surface.

Investigation revealed it had all been overseen by a powerful, local politician who needed the to consume the sacrificed body parts with Charles Taylor, the president at that time, in order to increase their political and spiritual power.

When the citizens of Ganta heard about the body, they broke out into a riot in an attempt to bring this politician to account, because everyone loved Wanasaywon. The government had to send in a special unit to take out the body to destroy the evidence.

There was a massive cover-up. The killers were never brought to justice.

Bendorah says she recently saw one of the sons of the murderers;

driving around Monrovia in a big, fancy Jeep, living a life of luxury.

Despite the heavy material that Bendorah and her ragtag group of actors tackle, they take it on with an enthusiasm and energetic drive that is astounding. They have plans for more live performances, radio broadcasts, and also various ideas for making videos. Through all these channels they hope to shed light on these unpunished atrocities and bring them to the public's attention. "The name of our group" reveals Bendorah, "is 'The Revelation is Christ.'" She adds with a smile, "T-Ric for short."

With increased freedom in the press since the inauguration of Pres. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, public media is freer to expose atrocities. Bendorah's vision for T-Ric is to build a brighter future for herself and her children.

Equip's main tool for Community Education is drama / roleplay. It has been powerful in exposing lies and revealing truth in oppressed communities. Weekly radio dramas are performed by Equip CHAs and youth, men, and women's groups who are regularly bringing to life their stories, promoting health and justice. These programs are

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broadcast over much-listened-to FM radio stations.

Lights Help Save Baby Daygon's Life

"I've delivered a lot of babies, but I've never seen a baby so blue and lifeless as long as this one was."

On November 11, a handful of Equip volunteers, staff, and I were driving the dusty road to Ganta. Road weary after a full day travel I suddenly found myself taking a sharp, unexpected turn to the right, onto the rutted dirt track to our Equip Flumpa clinic. I wasn't planning to visit the clinic at all, but having followed the unexpected urge to turn, I thought I'd drive over there just to check the state of some rusted roofing sheets that I had heard needed to be changed. Surprised to see light streaming out through the windows, piercing the darkness outside, we went in to investigate.



The clinic's only patient was Oretha Daygon, a 23 year old woman from the village of Wheintin, who was just about to deliver her fourth child. Sarah Carlson (from Alaska), Equip's nurse supervisor, jumped in to help



Nurse Aid Saye Klesa and OIC Patience Julu with the delivery.

At 9:05pm, Oretha gave birth to a baby boy. He was lifeless, and still. Emergency suction and stimulation was started but still he remained blue for a dangerously long time. With artificial respiration and persistent suctioning he finally came around, his small chest rising and falling, bringing with it a fresh pink color and a healthy cry.

Had Oretha's baby been born in the dark traditional midwife hut at her village of Wheintin, like her other 3 children, this beautiful child would never have survived. The tense minutes, before the baby's crying reminded us of our vulnerability and the sharp howling:

....lifted our spirits and reminded us of our Creator, who came to earth as a child such as this and gave us this great work of compassion and hope.

The infectious joy of new life caught fire as the family and community members who were waiting outside burst in with song, dance, and shouting, filling the clinic with exuberant joy and happiness.

The rescue of this handsome baby boy was only made possible by the recently installed solar power lighting, thanks to funding from "USAID from the American people." and Holy Name Health Outreach Society. These sustainable lights have brought about a great increase in night time emergency care and deliveries being given at the clinics, which has resulted in many lives being saved.

We are so thankful that all 10 of our Equip supported clinics in Nimba have received this life giving technology.

Murderers Brought To Justice In Tappita

In the very early morning Lorpu Zube, a market woman, was walking to the town of Tappita. A group of Poro men shot and killed her for ritualistic purposes. They buried her in a shallow grave beside a nearby creek. Soon after she was found missing, stories started to circulate and a police investigation was launched. One of the perpetrators had leaked the

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story to someone who had gone to police. All of this came to the attention of one of our social workers and dozens of Equip volunteers and staff immediately began assisting with the investigations and facilitating the arrests of the perpetrators.

The police do not have the capacity to do their work here, because they have very few resources. Equip helps by providing them with a huge network of community volunteers, transportation, communication and aid in investigations, arrests and convictions. Staff members from Equip were present at all the arrests.

When arrested, the murderers were locked up in cells in the Tappita police station, awaiting transfer to Saniquellie. The friends and family of the murdered woman stirred up members of the community in Tappita to take justice in their own hands and go and kill the murderers. The tension intensified into a riot. The police were afraid and fled their station, opening the cells in which the murderers were kept. The mob then burnt the police station, killing the mother of one of the accused who was inside at the time.

Again, Equip was extensively involved in arresting, charging, and bring the perpetrators of this "jungle justice" before the courts. Seven people were found guilty and sentenced to a number of jail terms, including one life sentence. This case grabbed the attention of half the country and nearly everyone in Nimba County, so it became a very powerful statement that no human rights violation would go unpunished. It was a critical turning point. Up until this year everyone regularly got away with taking the law into their own hands, but seeing these people convicted and behind bars is having a huge impact.

This case is only one example of the 983 cases in which Equip has been able to help bring violent criminals

before justice in Nimba. By assisting the police in arrests, providing over 1000 victims with support and safety, breaking down the culture of impunity, and by fighting corruption in the courts, Equip has been able to bring new hope and justice to over 300 communities in Nimba. The County Attorney has gone so far as saying that “if it wasn’t for Equip’s partnership, there would be no justice in Nimba County.”

“The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.” Psalm 103:6

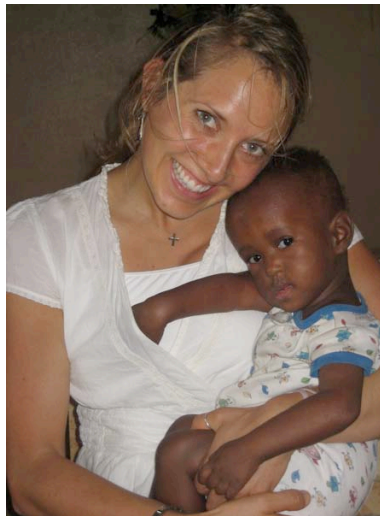
Sarah’s Story

By Sarah Carlson who is volunteering with Equip as a medical coordinator for the PHC clinics in Nimba County

I looked out one of the windows in the clinic to see up to 15 panicked women yelling, pushing, and running beside a young women lying in a wheelbarrow, moaning and holding her stomach. Chaos would be a good description of the scene coming to the front door of the rural Equip Duo Clinic. Being an emergency room nurse for the past three years, I knew the importance of staying calm and working fast and efficiently to medically stabilize the patient.

While the nurse aid ran and grabbed supplies to start Intravenous fluids, I tried to get the history from the moaning woman and the mixed emotional group of what had happened. After many questions to both patient, close friends and increasing family members who were arriving after hearing the news of their relative’s condition, we found out that she was pregnant and had chosen to take some “country medicine” two days prior to try to abort her baby. She had told the witch doctor in the community that she was only two months along but it turned out she

was four months and was suffering from an incomplete abortion. The “country medicine” she had taken was causing her body to have contractions but her baby, too young to live, was not able to pass through her cervix. We did not have the right tools in the clinic to perform any type of procedure or exam so after I made sure she had two IVs running into her arms we gave her a medication to increase her contractions to try to save the life of the mother who had chosen to kill her baby too young to have a choice.



In spite of angry accusations flying among the crowd gathered, we gave thanks that we serve the One and true God, the God of the impossible. A God who desires peace not chaos and whose love is unconditional. In the middle of the fear, shame, and pain, in that small rural Equip clinic, we gathered around the patient still moaning on the bed and with the family, friends, and the clinic staff we called out to Jesus for His provision, for His healing, for His peace, for His forgiveness, for His love to fill the room and hearts of each one present. The clinic room that was once filled with anger, fear, and commotion felt suddenly calm and peaceful. Pain and uncertainty was still present but everything was placed into its rightful place, the hands of the Lord. As we prayed and continued

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to feel the presence of God in the room Kuma (not her real name) began to moan less. The argument of her family members began to cease and life was put into perspective. After a few more minutes she tried to sit up and even though she still was feeling pain she had the strength to walk. We cleaned her and talked with the family about finding transportation to the hospital and told them the urgency of getting to the hospital to prevent infection and bleeding that could quickly kill her. The family members pooled their money together to send the woman by car to the hospital. I found out the next week that Kuma had survived the trauma and was resting, and gaining more strength with each day. Please pray for Kuma, that complete healing will reach deep into her soul.

The Lord has crafted us all for a specific purpose and He has equipped each of us with all that we need by His Holy Spirit. Coming to Liberia to volunteer with Equip Liberia was definitely the Lord’s guidance in my life and a step of obedience in which I had to trust the Lord. I know that the Lord has taken my hand and led me to exactly where He wants me now. I have a deep Joy and Peace knowing that all the Lord desires from each of our lives, whether we are in North America or Africa, the city or the bush, is complete obedience and a daily desire to seek the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, sharing the Love of God and the message of salvation with everyone we meet and in everything we do.

Please continue to pray for the Equip clinics and the patients that we see every day. Pray that as their physical illnesses are assessed, treated, and cured that their spiritual lives would be renewed and they would know the Love their Heavenly Father has for them and that they would put their lives into the Hands of God and fix their eyes on Jesus, throwing away the practices of evil that so often entangle them. We can treat, but the Lord heals.

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What we really celebrate on Christmas, is that God, abundant in grace, humbled himself and became a poor man. -Yes, the great God became poor, needy, little and humble, a baby such as Oretha's, of poor parents, who could not even get accommodation for their newborn and had to place him in a manger. The Three Kings - did not find him in the palace of the rulers, but they found him in a place like Duo, where Christ is drawn to. He was found with those, who have little, those whose eyes are blinded through ignorance, despair and deception like Kuma who destroyed her baby and almost her life.

He came to bring justice to those who were victims of violence like Samuel Kotoh or Wanasaywon,,

He came to those who with open hands, eyes and ears really expect all from God and find peace after destruction. I think we battle to truly understand Christmas in our days, because we have forgotten, through our business, to open our hands in readiness to receive His gifts of forgiveness and love, because we have forgotten, through our hurry, to put our eyes on the greatness of the humble God, because we have forgotten, through our cleverness, to meditate on the word made flesh in our hearts, because we have forgotten, through our pride, to entrust ourselves simply to God.

Let us pray that we may become simple again like the shepherds, open, aware of our need to understand Christmas and to rediscover it and to experience it as an event of very personal salvation that calls us to service and intimate friendship with God.

Family News

The experience of life with an empty nest often brings sadness and reflection but when I recently picked up this writing from Janelle, I realize that God speaks thru the hearts of our children, when with us, and when apart. Though life has not always been easy for us or our kids, our strength is in the Lord and His faithfulness is steadfast and for this we are grateful.

Our House, by Janelle Waines Ganta, Liberia 2004



"Our house in Ganta has a certain air about it. I don't really know how to describe it but the words peaceful, cool, spiritually clean come to mind. It's not a particularly beautiful house, but it's location, on a hill, surrounded by African wilderness sets the stage. The floors of the house are the only truly fine thing in the house, small mosaics of little stones are lain out smoothly in the open living room. The center design is a cross. There are no cracks, the floor is cool to the feet and inviting to walk on (even though it is usually dirty). The rooms in the house are large and spacious. Though bare of all marks that our family ever dwelt there, the walls resound with memories of those past days.

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I fail to see the reasoning behind this house's pull on me. Why it calls my name from all corners of the earth. Even now that I am here alone, with no family to make this place welcoming, I still feel right...at peace. (*..the family had moved to Monrovia*)

My only explanation for this strong attachment to this house is that, to me, it is the home of the rain. The Lord's rain that watered my soul in my young days, before the hard times.

Maybe it's the rain that will always call to me, the hopes that a torrent of water can join me fully, repeatedly with my creator and drip into my soul the joy of His love."



Janelle finishes her diploma of Midwifery from NewLife School in the Philippines in June and is seeking God's direction for further studies.

It is six days until Christmas break. **Josh, Matthew and Rebecca** will soon be taking the 2 ½ hour journey from their small community of Kiniabour to the airport and the 4 hour journey by air (in a small 19 place Beachcraft airplane) from Dakar (Senegal), to Banjul (Gambia), to FreeTown (Sierra Leone) and finally Monrovia, Liberia.

The transition from Canada to Bourafaye Christian School (BCS) in the desert of Senegal, went fairly smoothly with an enthusiastic reunion



of friends and teachers for the kids. Activities such as the Olympics, Crazy Hair Day, the Pink Panther Café and other fun stuff, break up the challenges of academics.

Reports from the school continue to encourage us. The director recently wrote these comments: "I think Matt seems a lot happier. He's doing really well at school as you will see from his report... I also want to encourage you about



Josh... in a prayer time for a troubled student, all of the kids impressed me by their maturity and kindness and their prayers blew me away – especially Josh was so amazingly empathetic and humble in the way he addressed God for this other child. I also am very encouraged by his academic progress."

We would ask that you continue to praise God and pray that Josh and Matthew will continue overcoming their dyslexia challenges.

The report on Rebecca from her friend Tristan: "It's just not possible to be nicer than Rebecca." Her enthusiasm and commitment to God, friends and family is contagious.



Menwoh is at home with us. He is presently asleep in the living room after attending an all night tarry (prayer meeting) at his indigenous church in Monrovia. Menwoh is truly the one who "delights in the Lord and in His word, he meditates, day and night!"



Daniel strikes out alone in Canada: Staying with Grandpa Garth and is learning the art of "cement demolition" Daniel has entered the workforce with a high end renovation company. At one point he said he definitely learned the art of sweeping and shoveling, being at the bottom of the pecking order has

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it's disadvantages. He has been described by his employer Randy as "a fine young man who's gentle spirit speaks loudly to the guys he works with. God has truly blessed you with a great son"

There has been only one Christmas - the rest are anniversaries. ~W.J. Cameron

We greatly appreciate your prayers, encouragement, and financial support – we could not do this work without your partnership.

We have need of volunteer/staff support on the field in both office management and fieldwork. Please consider joining our team.

God bless you in ways you cannot ask or imagine.

Enjoy the anniversary of Christ's Birth!

Much love from the Waines!

PS Gifts for this work can be sent to:
EQUIP Canada for Canadian Tax receipts
EQUIP Inc for US Tax receipts

Please include a separate note that this is "For the Waines work in Liberia" Thank you.

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