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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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Missionary #257

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Dear friends and family,

A couple of weeks ago, I invited our church friend, Amos Frank, to share his story with me so that I could share it with you. This account is paraphrased from the transcription of our conversation.

How did you end up at the Rafiki Teachers College?

In November 2014, I had to stop the language courses I was taking (to become a tour guide) because of financial issues with my family. So, I went to work for my aunt and lived from day to day without any direction for the future. About five months later, I came across a friend of mine that I had met in language school. He told me that his pastor mentioned a school in Moshi called Rafiki. They are running a Christian school. You go for an interview and if they accept you, they cover the school fees to attend. My friend was excited about the opportunity, but I was doubtful. What about the living expenses? I did not have any money. I told him that I would talk to my aunt, but I figured the answer would be no.

So, I talked to my aunt. She said, "No, it is not possible." So, I told my friend no. Later, my cousin returned from university. He overheard me talking in English with my friends from language school. He said to me, "Where did you learn to talk English like that?" I replied, "What do you mean? You are the one who went to university to pursue your degree." He explained that the only time he would speak English in university is when he had to make a speech and even then, he just read it. I told him I would be happy to teach him all I knew about English. But he wanted to know what was next for me. I shared about the school in Moshi and how my aunt said there was no way for me to go there. My cousin asked how much the bus fare to Moshi was. I did not know. We found out the cost of the bus and my cousin said he would give me the money for the fare. So that is how I got to Rafiki for my interview.

But behind all the circumstances, I can see how God was directing my life in ways that I could not tell at that time. Even the fact of how I ended up at the language school in the first place. I had been wanting to go to advanced level and attend university. My aunt had said that she would send me along with my cousin, but when the day came only my cousin was able to go. My aunt said nothing to me about it until months later when I asked, "Am I ever going back to school?" She said, "No. But if you want to stay and help in my restaurant, I can see about putting you in the language school nearby." I was open to it because I was happy to learn something new. And because I had learned to speak English with some fluency, I was accepted into the Rafiki program. If I had continued the other path I would have never come to the Rafiki Foundation which is where I gave my life to Christ.

I went to Moshi with my friend and another nine students from my region and we had our interviews. I was asked what I knew about the Bible and

could I tell any Bible story. I tried to tell a story about Peter's life but really did not know many details. We all tried our best. Later Dr. Kent [Rafiki missionary running the program at that time] told me that my English was good enough to join on July 23, 2018. I thanked him but told him I did not know if I could come based on my situation. He understood and told me, "We hope you come." So, we headed home with good news, but I did not know what would happen next.

So, this is like the walk of faith. We cannot tell what is going to happen next. You need to fully trust God in every step that you take. When I got home, I told my cousin and he was so happy. And my aunt? Well, she started asking questions. "How are you going to do that? Yes, I understand you are not paying school fees but how about your accommodation? Where are you going to live?" These were all very good questions. Then I talked to my mom. She was very happy for me but did not know how it would all work out. I was happy to wait and see what would happen. There was about a month before the class started.

Soon I found that my aunt had prepared a little charcoal burner for me to cook, and a big bag of charcoal. She told me that I could take this to Moshi with me. This was a good sign that I was going. Then my friend called and said that we could rent a room together. He would pay for the first two months and then I could pay. When my aunt heard this arrangement, she decided that was a good start and she gave us maize and beans and some extra money to help get there. We were ready to head to Moshi.

In so many ways, God was providing for us and we did not even acknowledge Him. We did not know how to pray but God knew what we needed. We arrived and felt like fish out of water because we did not even know where to find water for our room. We showed up to school and on Monday, Dr. Kent was happy to see me but was concerned about my situation. He proposed that he could pay me for a Swahili lesson each week to help pay for my accommodation. It seemed like a good plan to me. With that I felt confident that we could stay but I was so surprised to see how God would provide for us.

We were at our place for about four days when the pastor of Kimashuku church (Lutheran church within walking distance of Rafiki Foundation) came around to find us. We were preparing our dinner when he came and told us to grab our things and come to the church house. "Why?" we asked, "Who are you?" He explained that he was friends with my friend's pastor back in Kiratu and that they had a place for us in the church hostel. So, we went with him and showed us the room and explained that we could stay there without paying if we were willing to help the kids who were staying there to do their homework and their chores. We would be like the Patrons of the hostel. And that is when another door opened. We did not pay for rent, electricity, water, or even food! So, we ended up living there. I lived there for about two years.

After the first year, my friend went back home to work. He did not want to continue. I wanted to stay and six months later Paschal came, and later, Zachariah and finally, Charles. We all stayed together at Kimashuku. [Side note: all these young men completed the three-year training course and are currently employed as teachers at the Rafiki Foundation school in Tanzania.] So that is how God orchestrated everything for me to study at Rafiki.

What do you think is the most impactful thing that you learned during the program at Rafiki?

Number one is the way every lesson is connected to biblical truth. It is so unique. I had thought that to be a teacher you just need to know the lesson and share it with the students. The Rafiki Teachers College helped me to understand that all learning is connected to God. It changed my whole perspective of what it means to be a teacher. I realized there was more than teaching kids to know a set of facts. I learned that I could help them to understand and apply their learning to their life. All the sudden, I realized not only was there more to teaching, but more that I needed to understand about Christ.

Second important thing, and really it is the most important thing, that I came into the knowledge of Christ. It was in the second year of the program that I had this desire to grow more in the truth of Christ. Previous schooling always focused on academic performance. You faced severe punishment if you did not perform. I mostly stayed quiet and tried to avoid punishment, but I did not really learn anything. But this program at Rafiki helped me to understand that teaching is so much more than learning facts. I see myself as a mentor and guide to my students for their future. It guides me today on how I teach my students. My life began here (at Rafiki) and I still cherish and value it.



Buddies Paschal and Amos

Amos went on to describe his career with Rafiki and how he became a P.E. teacher even though he never played sports in school, and how he ended up teaching at a Christian International school in Moshi. In 2023, I met Amos at St. Margaret's Anglican church where we continue to worship together. Amos frequently leads the Scripture reading at church and is a regular member of the weekly Bible study. We enjoy talking about how to apply biblical principles in all areas of life. He is a wonderful example of the impact of the Rafiki Foundation on the people of Tanzania. It was a pleasure to hear his story. I hope my paraphrase of his words will point to the hand of God in his life and work.

We are blessed to see the work God has done and continues to do here in Tanzania through the ministry of the Rafiki Foundation. We thank you for all your support that has made this journey possible for us. Amos' story is one of countless stories from the work of Rafiki across the continent. Be confident that all your prayers and financial contributions to Rafiki Foundation are used for the glory of God here in Africa.

Please enjoy these additional pictures of Amos.



Gwen, Amos, and John
at our church retreat



Playing soccer with the Rafiki staff



Teaching is sharing life



Pointing out the way to go



Praying before the game



Coaching girls soccer at Rafiki



Amos coaching

Love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John & Gwen'.

Gwen and John Cicone

Learn more about Rafiki's expanding opportunities.

Visit our newly designed website RafikiFoundation.org to learn how to:

- Purchase the Rafiki Bible Study for small groups for your church or neighborhood
- Serve as a missionary with Rafiki
- Sponsor a child with the Rafiki Foundation to bring God's Word and the best education in the world to some of the neediest children in the world in Africa.

Explore the Rafiki Foundation YouTube channel.

Visit (youtube.com/@RafikiFoundation) for videos from Rafiki children, teaching at our annual Enrichment conferences, and the teaching at our African classical Christian conferences.

Listen to our podcast for current discussions on Rafiki's work in Africa truenorth.fm/show/the-rafiki-foundation-podcast/