



# RAFIKI

FOUNDATION  
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

April 2020 – Shakiyla Solomon

Dear friends and family,

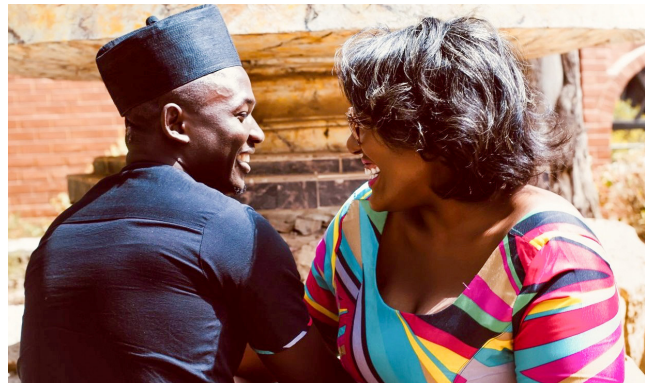
I wake up early in the morning, as of late, 4:30 a.m. I quickly brush my teeth, pull my hair into a high puff, put on sweats and a t-shirt, and head outside for a morning jog. I am greeted at the door by the flutter of tiny moths, crickets, grasshoppers, and the gentle caress of the morning breeze. Every morning, basking in God's creation has been a reminder that no matter where we are, He is near to us. As we wade through this season of confusion and try to prepare for what will happen next, be comforted that we serve God who has long been ready. Rely, surrender, and trust Him. I am praying fervently for you all. It is a bit surreal to see Louisiana on the news here daily, but I know that God is sovereign and is covering you all. COVID-19 somewhat took us by surprise, but those morning jogs remind me that He knows the beginning from the end and He will be glorified. Isn't that reason to be joyful?

Since my last newsletter, I was able to visit my family! I do not think I can adequately describe the joy I felt to finally be in their arms. After over a year in Nigeria, I felt God's comfort pour over us all as we embraced in the middle of the airport. It was the push I needed to continue in service and as always, God's timing was perfect. We spent Christmas at home, in pajamas, and with lots of food and laughter. We spent the New Year at home, with all of our loved ones, lots of food, and just as much laughter. God has been incredibly faithful. Before coming on the field, many veteran missionaries told me, "You will have to leave your home and begin a new one in Africa," but our Father has so graciously allowed Louisiana and Plateau State to feel like home in different ways but with the same intensity and normality. I was also able to engage in a few interviews with local journalists and newspapers after a visit from

Washington-Marion which was another sweet, unexpected gift from the Lord.



As you know, Ishaku and I have been planning our wedding for the past few months. Due to the government and medical restrictions on group sizes, instead of postponing the wedding, we have decided to have a small, intimate ceremony so that we can begin our lives of service together. Our guest list slowly went from 415 to 40. As hard as it is to accept that my family will not be present, I am encouraged in the fact that we will celebrate in God's timing, with all of my babies here, in the most Nigerian way possible, and with no health risks. *Please pray as we transition into life as one.*



In Nigeria, before the marriage ceremony, the couples do what is called an "Introduction." Here, the family of the groom meets the bride and her family for the first time as she accepts his proposal



of marriage. We were unable to do this, so instead, I went with him to his village and was able to meet many people from the community as well as family members I had never met before. Thankfully, I met his mama on many occasions, and she was warm and welcoming enough for everyone! That is her in the blue wrapper. Many people were unable to understand or speak English, I do not speak his tribal language (Rukuba), my Hausa is not nearly as good as it needs to be, but we still prayed, celebrated, laughed, and embraced one another. Ishaku and I are seeing just how much of our marriage is a testament to the Gospel and the love of Jesus Christ that knows no boundaries.



At the school, it has been a goal of ours to intentionally push toward a culture of creativity on campus. The students are, and have been, engaging in athletics, clubs, and self-expression in as many ways as possible. This past term, they competed in a track meet at one of the local schools. They did a beautiful job, so we had a “Medaling Ceremony” during assembly in front of the entire school. They truly felt celebrated. Those smiles make every day brighter.



At the track meet



Receiving their medals

We closed the year with a science-based Recitation and a Field Day filled with life and love. Our Home Economics Club had their first annual fundraiser and it was awesome to watch the parents support them. We played the annual teacher vs. student volleyball and football matches, the students had sack races, tug-of-war, and face painting. Then, we closed the day with a slideshow of images collected during the term. I am eternally grateful for all of you who are partnering with me. The joys of service greatly outweigh the challenges and even in those, our God is made known.





I am currently reading through *Missions* by Andy Johnson, and it talks about the possibilities in reaching the nations through your career. I know that education permeated my heart in ways I did not fully understand, and I am confident in the fact that it was a launching pad to sharing the Gospel, God's love, and His grace to the nations. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "*I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 13:47).

Thank you for sending me. I love you.



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Field day fun!