

A Tanzanian family enriches my life

- An encounter in which worlds collided, cultures were exchanged and a friendship was born!

Leserian (3), his brother Lesarupa, born in June, and his parents Samuel and Likeness live in Tanzania, in a part far outside of the district Kigamboni in Dar es Salaam, a city of 1,4 million inhabitants.

Through Couchsurfing, a website for travelers who prefer to live cheap and, above all, in close contact with the culture while they are on vacation, I have made contact with Samuel while I was still in Germany.

Hence, he became my local contact person and I could only hope that everything would go over as planned.

As agreed, he picked me up, helped me get settled in my new surroundings, showed me the city, that couldn't have been more chaotic, himself and lastly proudly presented me with his modest home, which would now become my place to stay for the following days as well. It was a "brick-ruin", which he himself had built stone on stone: "Whenever I had some money left, I added another stone. Everything you can see here, I built completely on my own!"

It took some time for me to learn to appreciate these "nullities" to a great extent. "Come on!", said Samuel; "I'll show you the bathroom." He led me across an area covered with weeds, over rubble, past his 3 goats, to a small "shed" made of stone. It had two wooden doors, that could be closed with another brick. "On the left here is our toilette. And on the right is the shower." I had to hide my disgust and pretend to be excited. All I saw was nothing more than a hole in the ground on the left and another hole in the ground with a plastic bucket on the right. I definitely had envisioned the "bathroom" differently.

Fortunately, he didn't interpret my perplexed expression correctly and added the



clarification: "Oh, we get the water from the well over there. You are lucky! We are the only family around that have their own well. All our neighbors come and get their water here. In bad times we also drink that water. But you shouldn't try it. We are used to the quality of water. I assume your quality is much better, but it will do for washing." Even the well and the appliance to haul the water up were built by Samuel himself.

His English, his mechanical skills, his constructive way of thinking and even his participating on Couchsurfing showed me that he was definitely interested in a communication and an exchange with the Western civilization. Among other things, he viewed it as a way of improving his living condition, in that he implemented ideas and tried to transfer what he had seen or heard to his life and modernize it that way. It shocked me that he, who had studied and works as a teacher, as well as his wife, had to live under such circumstances. And those two were above-average well off.

Back in the “house”, I was introduced to little Leserian. Leserian is a Massay-name and



means “the peaceful one” and fully lived up to his name. He is the most affectionate, funny and content child I know. I immediately took him into my heart. Because it was around Eastern, I brought him a little chocolate bunny as a present to explain to him, how we celebrate Eastern in Germany. He couldn’t believe that there really was chocolate under the golden wrapping paper. He looked at me with large eyes, but instead of swallowing up the chocolate greedily he shared it with everyone around. Even with me, which really touched me. He is such a thankful and selfless child. Even though he is only 3 years old, he already understands what honest appreciation is. Unbelievable. Afterwards he spent the entire evening playing with the little golden bell, which the

bunny had hanging around his neck and was completely fascinated by it. A thing that we would throw away immediately gives a huge joy to children in different places and they are very creative in the usage of simple odds and ends.

In the evening we ate fish together, which fishers had gifted us at the beach. The meal was cooked on a small fire on the ground in one of the two bedrooms. Apart from these two rooms they also have a living room, but that is it.

One of the rooms was given to my disposal and I was quite surprised that it didn’t rain through the scarce wooden roof, even though it rained rather heavily that night. In the morning they also shared their food with me: rice with beans. Cheap, but still filling.

Next to the house was a little shed, that served as a “grocery store”, in which the neighbors were able to buy simple products for small money. That way and through some sort of “hair salon”, in which Likeness works next to her profession as a teacher, she and Samuel make a little money on the side.

Samuel will soon have to stop teaching, as he will not be able to finish his studies because of a financial shortage. He hopes to one day have enough money to be able to continue his studies and resume his job.

I took the family and especially Leserian to my heart. Their selfless manner really touched



me. It is nice when people share what they have, but the feeling when people who barely own anything, share this tiny amount with you is indescribable. They know that I have a better life in Germany than they have, but they still didn’t expect anything in return. They simply, as if it went without saying, shared food, water and all their belonging with me. In this manner, they regarded me as part of their family after a short time.

Even now, being back in Germany, I still keep in close contact with them. Therefore, it hurt me all the more, that Leserian came down with malaria and had to be treated with numerous drugs, that were only barely able to prevent his death.

And I was just as happy that Likeness gave birth to a healthy baby boy, that will hopefully become an equally amazing child as his brother Leserian is.



Samuel and his family not only made my time in Africa priceless, but also changed my perspective on life and enriched it. That's why it is now a matter of the heart to give something back to them and acknowledge all of their selflessness. Even if money isn't everything in the world, it would still help them, especially now, and relieve many things for them.

I am happy that you have read my / out story of a wonderful encounter and would be glad, if you too could help me bring joy to Samuel and his family.