

March 2010

Now What?

Fleeing from the coronavirus in South Africa before the country closes its gates, like birds escaping a storm, and arriving in Salt Lake City only eight hours before an earthquake, makes it hard not to think that the end of the world as we know it is at hand. My grandchildren are frightened, crying, unsure. We are all at a loss, wondering how it all went so wrong yet at the same time hoping to salvage something worthwhile out of these calamities.

Guillaume and I had just made contact with the largest hops growers in South Africa and bought enough for him to brew beer for several months. One thing we know for sure -- people will keep drinking beer! And his takeout pizza business, already thriving, will probably do even better, perhaps even encouraging people to buy it by the slice, a first in Benin, like his beer.

I feel guilty sheltering from the storm in the U.S., but family is important and good health care scarce in Benin. I am, after all, the target audience -- 72 with diabetes, high blood pressure and probably not strong enough to survive if I get sick. But the question remains: how to make the most of this, turn lemons into lemon juice, keep strong when everything feels so overwhelming. Survive the stock market collapse and continue to do the work that needs doing in Benin.

Our pump to supply water to our house and fields, powered by solar panels, is finally working. Next in line is a small house for the chickens to supply eggs for the restaurant. We will feed them the mash left over from the beer. Everything possible will be recycled and someday, soon we hope, fish will be leaping from the pond and rabbits jumping around in their pens, all fed by organic greens grown on our farm.

Students in need of a money-making skill will be taught how to grow green compost and till it into the soil. They will learn about good nutrition, how to grow healthy vegetables and turn them into delicious meals, see first-hand the environmental and economic benefits of solar power to water our fields and provide electricity. We will teach them English as a way to get ahead in the world and escape the dominance of their colonizers.

But we can't do it without your help. Our website BIO-BENIN.ORG is close to being up and running. We hope you will make a donation to help us make this dream a reality as we struggle to make sense of the world and bring something fruitful out of so much suffering and uncertainty.

Julie Wang

To make a donation to BIO-BENIN, please send your cheque to 7483 Pinebrook Road, Park City, UT 84098. Our tax-deductible number is 84-274245.