

Micah's Travel Journal
April 15-27, 2005 Khartoum and Nyala, Sudan

Day One, at the airport

Dear Journal,

I am sitting in the airport after getting food at Wok & Roll and McDonalds, and kicking my Dad's butt in a game of Scrabble. While I accidentally leaned back on a stranger's arm. While going through the security check the people in front of us, both the security guard and the passenger, were being real jerks to each other. I tried to go online to email my family but the machine ate my dollar so I am gonna sit for now and do crosswords. Hope to see you all very soon, your loving son and community member.

Micah

Day Two, London England

After spending five hours on a plane, hot and stuffy was how I felt. We watched lame movies and ate chicken and rice with greens, bread and pie. After sleeping only two minutes I have bad jet lag and I am very cranky. The airport in London is like two malls put together! It's great. Me and dad made an exchange for some pounds and are sitting at this amazing place. There are video games every where and t.v.'s and computers all over. Everything is free after you pay at the door. Chips, soda, coffee, anything you can think of. Even caviar.

Now we are on the plane on our way to Beirut. When I look out the window all I see is cloud after cloud on a light blue sky. I just had lamb, bread, veggies and pie for lunch on the plane and am now watching Ocean's Twelve. I am going to ask dad to play Scrabble with me after the movie ends.

20 minutes before landing in Beirut I looked out the window and saw a red planet, maybe Jupiter, and it made me think of the rest of my family and community back home. I miss you all very much and I hope to see you soon.

Day Three, Khartoum

I am sitting in bed after a long day of running around.. My dad is asleep in the bed next to mine with serious jet lag problems that got caught up today. It was HOT today with a high of 108 and a low of about 73. Thank God our hotel has air conditioning. First thing this morning I had my problem's with jet lag and dad practically had to peel me out of bed. We went up a floor and had an early breakfast, toast and cornflakes with mangoes. We discussed our plans for an hour. Tomorrow's best case scenario we will go talk to Fr. Peter about flying to Nyala so I better sleep tonight. My homework from the teachers got lost along with my bag at the airport. So I guess I won't have to worry about doing it. We hung around the hotel for a while watching soccer and eating trail mix. I wrote the rest of my family two emails but they still haven't written back yet. I really miss them all. When we went downstairs to see about getting me a camera a man with a white robe and hat was sitting in the hall. In front of him was an assortment of old coins, bags, hand made necklaces and bracelets, stones and an array of other things as well. Me and dad looked thru and got mom a gold colored metallic steel bracelet. We went outside and it was steaming

hot. We looked around for a camera but they were all too expensive. Khartoum is very big and there are stores all over. On our way back to catch a cab to the store to replace my clothes a girl about my brother's age came to us and asked us for money. Dad gave her 1,000 Sudanese dinars, which is like 5 dollars, and she ran after her mother and sister. Seeing this place makes me thankful for everything. We got back and saw the cab driver waving at us. He said that he was having his car washed by a boy and he will be ready in five minutes. Me and dad went upstairs to our room and put on sunscreen. I made sure to grab my hat and my sun glasses before we went back downstairs. The taxi was shiny clean and the driver was excited. He was an older man who had two sons and 7 or 8 grand kids. His wife is dead and his kids don't live with him anymore. His cab shows many pictures of his family and 3 stickers on the windshield with hand with eyes in the back. He dropped us off at the market and waited outside for us. Me and dad had no trouble finding socks and boxers, with some shirts, but pants were a problem. Every pair was 32. Pair after pair we searched for hours until we got two that fit me. We bought our driver a red slushie that he put in the trunk and we were off. There was traffic and the city was gridlocked but we eventually got back. We had lunch and got back into the cab. We told him to take us to the Nile but he insisted on bringing us to the museum. We had a good time and took pictures of all the tombs, statues and mummies. After practically running out of film we wandered across the street where people were finishing their prayer. I walked with dad to a place where we saw some men come ashore with a boat. I put the bulb from a plant I found in my pocket. We thought that they were fishermen but it turns out they were taking sand across the river and selling it. Even though we spoke different languages we joked a little and when we left and I took out my bulb one of the men spoke. He said the bulb would give me a rash. It did. It is painful to write and it's ten after ten so I am going to bed. I am homesick and miss my family and hope they will email us back.

I love them all.

Day Four, Khartoum

Today we had a very long day. When I woke up it was like stepping out of a blender of feelings. I was hot, dizzy, tired and home sick. I was very sad last night so I did not get much sleep. I thought about being home and seeing the rest of my family in America. Tomorrow is another big day for me and my dad. We will get on a small plane and travel to Nyala, Darfur to visit the camp that the government isn't actually governing at all. This camp is kicked to the curb and not provided with any food or water. That is not right and we know it. We will pay for a truck to deliver the food and water with and get a translator/guide that can help us in the market and with the people. I am both excited and scared.

I know what me and my dad are doing is right but some people in the country do not agree. While preparing for our trip my dad tried to relax me as much as possible. We went to the Afra shopping center to play billiards and to bowl. For that period of time my mind was clear and I wasn't worried about my family back home, I wasn't worried about going to a place where people live in garbage huts but have hope and joy that amounts to enough to fill up a whole planet. No, I wasn't worried because I was with my dad. I love my dad so much and am happy that I have the maturity to travel with him. When I am with him I feel safe and protected and I see all the good things hidden inside the bad.

Nyala, Day 5

Today we got a wake up call at 7:00 AM from Fr. Peter saying we were late for our plane to Nyala. The day before it was supposedly leaving at 11:00 AM but the times changed. When we got there security did not want to let us onto the plane but our driver told them there was a mistake in the time and they let us on. The plane was full and there was a cute baby boy sitting in front of us but I did not get a picture of him. The plane ride was about an hour and half long all together (two stops). I fell asleep on the plane but awoke when we landed in Nyala. A bus drove us 20 feet to the airline center to claim our baggage and then a friend of my dad's with a white SUV drove us to a small shabby room where we will be staying.

We went to my dad's friend's office where when we got there we had a cup of coffee and talked about getting a truck and a translator. Our translator, Rita is a nice woman who will go to the camps with us to translate. Today we will go to the camp to see about bringing a man and woman leader to take to the sook (market) in town to buy food for the village that is in need. We will help the people who need it most first, and then move on to the others. We also plan to interview the people in the camp about how they got to be there. We brought toys and food to help them and make their lives better. When we got done talking to the 50 sheiks, we got our driver to take me, Rita and Dad to the sook/market in town to buy fruits and tarps to cover people's huts and tents but we couldn't find any fruits. We ended up buying ten huge tarps. When I was waiting in the car while Rita and our driver looked for dates in big bags for the people to eat, some boys came up to the window and we made faces at each other. People over here are so friendly and nice. We went to my dad's friend, Ezibon, office to talk to him and Rita about our plans for the camp. I emailed mom from his computer and had an orange soda. We got a ride from our driver back to where we are staying. Dad took a nap while I grabbed my camera and took a walk around the large yard. I saw two geckos, a cat, pretty flowers and a green bird. The man who works here as a guard and I had a long conversation and played soccer for about two hours, then came inside. Later me and dad washed up and went for a long walk to the market to get water for us to drink. We were so tired on our way back from our walk there we got a cab to take us home. The cab driver worked for Doctors Without Borders (M.S.F.) and spoke good English. When we got home the power was still out so we had to turn the generator on. We took short showers and watched satellite t.v. for a while. Then Ezibon came over to talk to us. He said that some of the people in the camp were just poor people from the nearby towns and that they came in search of food and water. I tried to take notes but there was an interesting movie on about the Chinese mafia so I gave up. Overall today was a good day. We got to the camp to see the sheiks and got facilitated. I and my father are both very tired and homesick but we only have one week left and the days will go by very quickly and will be home soon. Only one week left.

Day 6, Nyala Darfur

Today was the first visit to the camp bring food. It was long, hot and hard. We drove in the back of a pickup truck with food and tarps for the people. We also brought toy planes and balls. When we got there the people all waved and smiled because they recognized us from the day before. The only thing most people said was "okay, okay" when we were there. Earlier that morning we

woke up at 7:30 and got dressed. When our translator Rita got here we went to the Sook. We bought 100 pound bags of peanuts, sugar, rice and dates. When we went to one of the shops we saw dried spiced LOCUSTS! We got meat sandwiches and went back to the Sudanaid guest house. We put the food into small bags and talked about how we would go about our plans. We said that we would go speak to the head sheik and see about bringing food and interviewing some families that Rita knew. As I said we rode in the back of a white pickup to the camp. When we stopped the truck one of the sheiks told us the head sheik was in a meeting with someone and could not speak with us at the moment. The children had gathered around the truck and one of the elder sheiks was getting annoyed. He kept telling people to move but he could not get them to stay back. I am a little mad that he would not let me give out the toys but I realized that that would just get people riled up. We kept having to move the truck because people in the crowd were so desperate they were pushing each other to get to the truck to take the food.

Our driver was getting mad because the people kept crowding his truck. It was sad to see all of the needy people but I felt good knowing I was one of the reasons they got to eat today. Knowing that tonight they went to bed with a full stomach and did not last night sparked some unheard of energy source inside of me that enabled me to see what I saw without having serious emotional damage although there was some at times. Hearing the laughter of the children and seeing the smiles on their faces filled me with joy as much as it did them. It is sometimes hard for me to be so far from home with my friends and family but I know that I am here helping a slowly moving good cause. I get the gist, sort of, that the government has gotten better since December from stories that I have heard but they still need much improvement such as our government in America.

Both me and my father are homesick now in our beds. He saw how sad I was and said we will call mom tomorrow. I said no. As much as I wanted to call I thought it would be better to save our contingency for other reasons. I felt very foolish for making him want to call home. The guards are outside chatting away even though it is almost one in the morning. I have become good friends with them and sometimes play soccer with them when I am not helping my Dad. I would not be here if it wasn't for him and he says the same. He says that I am an enablement and a helpful person, even though he was the one organizing the trip. (I have to admit I did help with washing laundry in a bucket and drip drying it outside.) I think my father is a courageous man and after being on this trip together we will see each other in a different way forever.

Day Seven, Nyala Darfur

Today was a long day. I am very sick with a bad stomach ache and head ache. We woke up and my stomach was killing me. After I got dressed there were a bunch of people helping bag the ten 100 pound bags of peanuts we got the night before at the market. It was me, my dad, Rita, Ahmed, Elizabeth, Lillian, and the two guards. We got them bagged quickly and put them in the truck. We sat down and talked about how we would divide food among the people. We said we would stay inside Ahmed's truck so we don't get pulled away like last time. We would stay at the edge of the camp and unload all of the bags before the crowd formed. It did not work very well. The first thing that was wrong was the driver took us to close to the middle of the camp. (see map) People crowded, pushed, shoved and snatched food and toys. Ahmed was frustrated as we all were, and started beeping. One of the men grabbed my leg and I fell in the back of the truck.

When we left I ended up with a sprained ankle and a lumped head.

Sometimes it can get very hard to maintain patience with all the commotion. It was a hard long day but we got everything done in an acceptable manner. There is no good way to feed 17,000 desperate people in an I.D.P. Camp in only one week. Our mission is a symbolic one to reach out to others in our nation.

Day Eight, Nyala Darfur

Today was a good and bad day mixed together. I was feeling much better than the day before and had lot's more energy. Today we are going to buy the food in bulk and take it to the camp. When we got there we brought the food in the bags inside. Then some of the men came in and started bagging it up which is a change since they are usually relaxing while the women do all the work. Today both genders worked together. When the crowd formed things got rough. People started pushing through the doors and splitting gaps in the thatch walls. One woman was so desperate that she walked through a bush of thorns by the door just to get food for her children. My father says he would do the same for me. It was sad but we got it done with the help of the A.U. Soldiers. We went home dusty and tired with lists of soccer teams in need of balls. I can't imagine how hard it must be for these people.

Day Nine, Nyala Darfur

Today was one of our more calmer days. When we finished buying food we went straight to the camp. We went a little later in the day because there were things we had to do before we could go to Derej. We had to pay for the two cows we were bringing to Derej tomorrow and do a handful of other things before we went. When we unloaded the food into the St. Vincent Center the sheiks arrived. They helped bag the food while me and my father went outside to hand out footballs (soccer balls). Ahmed our driver had organized the teams and had them sit while we gave out the balls. After the teams had went out to play ball some of the younger kids gathered around us. They followed us all around the camp and sang and clapped for 20 minutes. When we looked around our translator Rita was no longer with us. She got lost in the crowd. When we got back to the center, people had crowded and knocked down the door. My dad said go to the truck and we went to get Elizabeth. Ahmed was there and every one was ready but Rita. She was still lost. I was getting a little scared that we couldn't find her. When we saw her we pulled her in and left. The kids chased the truck so Ahmed drove faster. I had bad sunburn and my face and arms hurt a lot. We still had time on our hands so we went to the market to see about getting more food. Instead of bringing food we decided to interview two families. When we went back we gave each family a hen and talked with them about how they got to be at Derej. I took great pictures of the people before we had to go. I think today was the best day of all even though I got sunburn. The best part was asking the woman what her family ate today and hearing her say "It was amazing, these people cam and brought rice, tomatoes, and onions and we all ate together." She didn't know it was us who brought the food.

Day 10, Last Visit

Today was a great day. We used up our money to bring food to the people at the edge of Derej

who we had spoken with the previous day. I woke up to a cup of strong tea and a mad father. Our translator Rita had not shown up. Elizabeth gave me a big hug and said she would miss me. I would miss her too. She was very helpful and nice to us while we were in Nyala. We finished tea and got dressed and were both awake and ready to go. Ahmed was ready to go and got up when we came outside. Still no Rita. Time was passing and we had to go so we left without Rita. We first went to go get the two butchered cows we paid for. Dad got his camera fixed so I took some pretty gross pictures of the bloody cow meat being hacked and sliced and put into the truck. The man said before the cost was 80,000 Sudanese Dinars (250 SD to the dollar) for two cows but now he was making a fuss. We said we need to pay extra for the guard and for the walk (which was short) he had to "suffer" from to get the cows to the field where they were slaughtered. We ended up paying 70,000 SD extra in the end. We got to the edge of Derej, we unloaded the cow meat to the sheik and started giving out toys. It felt good to see the kids chase after the balls and planes we threw from the back of the truck. When the toys were gone we left the camp with all of the kids chasing behind the truck. It's hard to stand in the back of a pickup with 4-wheel drive on a bumpy desert road with 50 kids chasing you but the smiles on their faces are definitely worth it. We had a lot of time left on our hands so we decided to get a few more bags of veggies at the market. We were going to stay longer at the camp and play soccer with the kids but we saw my dad's photographer friend's plane pull in at the airport. So we had to go quickly. We got the bags and dropped them off at the camp before a crowd could form. We went back to the Sudanaid guest house and took showers and changed into clean clothes. We went to the airport and sat under a tree until Brad came out. When he did we got back in the truck and made yet another trip to Derej to take pictures. We chatted on our way back and then on our way to the airport. Our flight to Khartoum was bumpy and there was a lot of air sickness. When we got here we went to the Acropole to find out we had to get our friends to wire money to the owner's account because we couldn't pay. Today was a great day and it feels great to be in Khartoum. I will see my family soon and I am excited.

Day 11, Summary of Nyala

People say that I went to Derej and saved people but I think differently. I might of contributed to the long hard period of work that needs to be done-----continued after entry about Brad's arrest-----

Tues Night/Wed Morning

Brad's Arrest

Brad has been arrested in Nyala for taking pictures in Derej. In the Acropole it is frantic. George is mad because he (Brad) has been arrested with the Acropole hotel written on his passport. He is worried about losing business. We have been IMing (instant messaging) mom for about an hour and are worried about the secret police. When we get on the plane we will be home free. All through the night when we were talking to Martin (a German aid worker) and the reporter from the New York Times I was scared because the secret police were looking for us. I was scared because we might be detained at the airport. I was scared that I wouldn't go home. But then like a miracle something happened. A man who worked for the Embassy was sitting in the lobby. He overheard our conversation with Martin and asked if he could help. He called some people and

before we knew it we had a ride to the airport and an embassy escort. If you have faith good things will happen. We talked with the reporter for an hour and then he went up to bed. We then got the news that Brad had been put on house arrest for a while. I snuck on to the computer to check email and play video games when our transport arrived....