

Feb 2008 Busara

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Many of you have met me in some very strange places all over the world and I hope that you enjoy my telling you about my life here in Zanzibar. I have been living and working in Zanzibar since September 2004. I was a volunteer consultant with ZAPHA+ (Zanzibar Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS) for three years, spent two years as the PLHA (people living with HIV/AIDS) advisor to the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative and am now focusing on local small business development working with ZEDO (Zanzibar Enterprise Development Organization). I am an older American woman who graduated from Tufts University with a degree in Political Science in 2004 before coming to Zanzibar to learn Swahili. I fell in love with Zanzibar and the people and I hope to stay here for a very long time. I have started a foundation in the US called Participate Now! that funds the very small scale projects that I am involved in. And with that I do my best to promote all of the most wonderful aspects of Zanzibar – and Sauti za Busara (Words of Wisdom) is by far one of our greatest and most splendid treasures.

I am finally going to write an email focusing solely on Sauti za Busara – the most fantastic music festival in the world. If you want more professional photos and info you can go to www.busaramusic.org I am going to write about my experience enjoying my fourth Busara festival and all that it entails as an ex-pat living in Zanzibar. In many ways it's one of the big social events of the year – people who work up in the coast running hotels or other organizations come into town and we catch up on all of our news. For me it's also a fabulous networking event (my favorite pastime) as all you have to do is sit down next to someone and start talking. I met an American who's been living in Thailand and working with Laotian refugees, a sound man from Minneapolis, the French cultural attaché to TZ, a Canadian lawyer who is volunteering at an orphanage in Dar es Salaam for two years, a lovely American man who has been working with local Makonde carvers in Mtwara on the mainland, a Norwegian doctor who is here volunteering at the hospital OB/GYN ward, an artist from California and a German music promoter who is very involved in Zanzibar. That's just a few of the new friends that I made and then I was the social butterfly catching up with many of my other ex-pat friends who live here.



This was the opening group Nfithé from Mozambique – the venue is set inside the Old Fort that was built a long time ago (I'm not a good historian so I don't know the exact date). In the center is Bi Kidude, one of our most famous Zanzibaris. Everyone tries to guess her age but she acts like a feisty young 30 year old at best all the time!!! She sings and dances and is a famous taarab singer – I can't quite explain taarab to you but it can be quite wonderful and has lots to do with the racy words that are used. I've been fortunate to have seen Bi Kidude perform at a number of different events from a private party to a parade to a sunset cruise on a dhow where she had all of us laughing hysterically and singing along with her. The fort is a great place to hold a festival – it felt a bit like an exotic Woodstock and I just love that the festival is so accessible to the local people. You can get in for free before 8:00pm and even after that the tickets are priced so that everyone can afford them.



Yusuf Mahmoud is the director of Busara and one of the most wonderful people I've ever met. He has such a love for Zanzibar and the people here - he is so calm and thoroughly enjoys himself during the festival when you would think he would just be totally stressed. He is here with Judi and Aliyah – Judi and her husband Massoud, own a number of restaurants, one of them being our famous Archipelago by the Indian Ocean. The center photo is taken from a table in her restaurant – the winds have changed and so the fishermen are building their boats on the beach by her restaurant. Archipelago is the restaurant where I take everyone for their first dinner in Zanzibar – it's a lovely setting and a great place to meet friends. On the right is the group that I love so much, Maulidi ya Homu –the music group that I have been following for over a year now. They sing the praises to the Prophet Mohammed with such fervor and love and they are mesmerizing to watch. Last week some of them came to my house and asked if I would be their business advisor. I often bring people to experience them when they practice at their madrassa (school) and they would like to promote themselves internationally (they have already performed in Paris) but want to make sure that they do it in such a way to preserve their religious and cultural roots. It is a great honor for me that they have asked me to help them.



I always run into friends – this is Saidi who is the electrician/handyman in my building and I have known him since I moved in to the flat in 2005. He is 26, the same age as my youngest son JD, and so he calls me his “Mama”. He is a wonderful young man and it was great to see him at the festival enjoying all of the music. The magnificent center photo was taken by my friend David – the ones I took of this performer didn't come out as good. This is the lead singer with the group N'Faly Kouyate and Dunyakan from Guinea/Variou. He plays the kora and it's just such a sensational performance. Busara is all about musicians coming together and sharing – their music and their experiences. Yusuf and the crew are masters at organization – the acts come on when they are scheduled to (what a joy) – they play for upwards to 30 minutes and then somehow the crew quickly adjusts the stage to allow the next act to perform. It is amazing watching everyone working together. I have a lot to learn from Yusuf – he seems to imbue a wonderful sense of cooperation and collaboration among the Zanzibari volunteers, the performers and even the crowd. There are so many people in Zanzibar looking for jobs and Yusuf does so much to give people experience and the opportunity to learn what their talents may be. I am of

course focusing on small business development and creating jobs and will be talking with Yusuf to learn as much as I can from his experience.



Here is the Akhenaton Family – my friend David is the lead singer. They sing locally and have a wonderful blending of harmony. Here is Sara – she’s an American in Zanzibar on a Fulbright doing research on music and cultural festivals. We have become good friends and she worked her little behind off the entire festival. She gave out audience surveys and will be compiling and analyzing them to help Busara make next year’s festival even better!!! On the right is the kitchen for the restaurant – the majority of the food in Zanzibar is cooked on an open fire with charcoal or wood. The food is delicious and many people came with their families for dinner and music every evening of the four nights.



Here is Bi Kidude again with Yusuf – he looks nice and relaxed don’t you think??? I have to go on a bit more about how much I admire him. During one act there was a problem with the microphone and the technical people were running around on stage trying to fix it. Yusuf was standing down by the stage and he never seemed to get ruffled – he just seemed (at least to me sitting in the crowd) quiet and supportive as the mikes were being repaired. I have talked to a number of people who have been working with him for the past years and he doesn’t micro-manage. That can be a huge problem for anyone running a large project and certainly something that I need to learn about it. There is an art to managing and delegating and then praising the success and efficiency that comes from that. In the center is Maalesh from Comoros – the groups that performed were absolutely wonderful and I appreciated that many of the “cultural” groups that I enjoy so much were on before 10:00pm (when I go to sleep). After that the bongo flavor and young peoples groups play until the early hours of the morning. On the right is Khadija, Marcos from Barcelona, and Katie from Canada. They are friends of mine who had a great time at the “friendliest music festival in the world”.

I have not written in detail about all of the music groups and you can check that out on the website but I had the best time and always look forward to this festival in Zanzibar!! I invite all of you to come and visit Zanzibar and Sauti za Busara – it is held every February and I assure you that you will have a wonderful time, relax and enjoy great music and make many new friends.

Whew – that felt good to get this out. I have been busy as a bee with the small business development here, my entrepreneur project and my new foundation Participate Now! I will send out an email about all of that in the next week or so.

Relax and Enjoy

Kathryn