

Martin Ganda

I grew up in abject poverty in the low income residential zone of Mutare, called Sakubva in Zimbabwe. I was very lucky to have a loving family and parents who sacrificed their minimal earnings to send me to school. My mother stayed at home to take care of the family while my father was one of the runners at the local paper mill. Although life was very difficult for my parents, they never forgot the importance of education.

I began my education at Chisamba Primary School where I participated in a penpal program with other schools in the USA. I was fortunate to be paired with a girl named Caitlin, who I became close friends with, corresponding over mail, exchanging pictures and cultural stories on the differences between the USA and Zimbabwe.

As time went by, the economic situation in Zimbabwe worsened, making it hard for my parents to support our family of five. School fees, uniforms and food were now beyond the reach of my parents' paltry income.

In Zimbabwe, we sit National Exams at the end of our senior year. During my senior year of high school, the economic environment in Zimbabwe meant my parents could not afford to pay for my examination fees. I had done very well in school and wanted to go further with my education. Caitlin and her family offered to help. I sat for the exams and obtained the highest scores in the region. Upon passing, I received a small scholarship from a local firm to go to a Catholic boarding school in another city called Nyanga. This was my first time apart from my family but was the only way I could reach my goal of pursuing a higher education.

At Marist Brothers High School I did my A Levels, focusing on the Sciences. With the Zimbabwean economic situation deteriorating further, I was driven me to look outside the country for college opportunities. As the end of high school drew near, Caitlin's family helped me look at some colleges in the USA, while supporting me and my family while I finished studying.

After graduating at Marist Nyanga High School, I was accepted to Villanova University on a full tuition scholarship. I would not have made it to Villanova

without the help of Caitlin and her family. At Villanova I was a double major in Mathematics and Economics. I graduated in 2007 and joined Goldman Sachs in New York City. Now that I am here in America, my family has moved from their ghetto community to a nice place, and my siblings now attend better schools.

I could not be where I am today without the help of Caitlin and her family, who took the leap of faith and believed in me while I was a rough diamond in the dust in Mutare. In Zimbabwe, there is a huge pit of talented young students who cannot reach their potential due to lack of funds. It is not about money or how many students we can help, but if we can rescue one child from poverty, that's one child that will go and change his/her family's life and eventually his/her community. This idea moved us to found the Seeds of Africa Foundation, a scholarship fund for promising students from poor backgrounds.