

The Carter Chronicle

January 2009 – Jason, Lisa, & Kenyon Carter



An African Dowry Presentation Story...as told by Jason Obama

In mid-December, we were invited to an official Fang dowry presentation as basically part of the extended family. With the men in the living room and the women on the patio, my good friend Pastor Clemente began speaking on behalf of the entire family. Like in the olden days, when one family came to another village to ask for the dowry price for the bride, our family didn't come with "empty hands." We had brought gifts of food which included several boxes of frozen fish, chicken, meat, about 15 gallons of cooking oil, 9 - 10 cases of Fanta and Coca-Cola, 3 large branches of bananas, and a list of 10-12 other food products (the list was read in its entirety in a formal fashion by one of the uncles during the presentation). Clemente then went on to explain that when a Fang hunter would encounter an elephant dead in the forest, he would leave a signal (perhaps a broken tree branch on the elephant) designating that he (and not another) had indeed discovered the elephant. The elephant was his. He had arrived before all others. In the same way, our token of food indicated that, as a family, we had arrived to ask for something very special (the girl Moda) and we were leaving a gesture in the house of her family (the food).

We had not come empty-handed or without purpose – all the food was our proof and sort of like our "ticket" into the house to begin the discussion for the bride-price (dowry). After a long story about the elephant, the oldest uncle read the list of food in its entirety. Next, Clemente pulled out 250,000 CFCA which is nearly \$500 (each family member contributed something) and counted all 25 bills in a formal fashion before the other family. At this point, the other family (all 20 or so members), left for a secret meeting to determine the dowry price. After about 15-20 minutes, the entire family of the girl came back to explain how special and valuable Moda was to the family. Her father, Pastor Valeriano, (whom we also know because he's in his last year of studies at Centro Bíblico Bata and took my Gospel of John class), explained that Moda was his first-born and a very special young woman. After much praise of their daughter, an uncle finally got around to giving the final dowry price: 500,000 CFCA (around \$1,000).

Up to this point, neither Moda (the 19 year old girl) nor Manuel (24 year old from "our" family) had said anything. However, at this point, the family of Moda invited her to



**Manual and Moda
along with Manual's mom-aunt Elena who calls
herself Kenyon's "abuela negra" (black grandma).**

the front of the room to see whether she would accept the proposal of Manual (and his family). Without speaking, she took one of the 25 bills on the table – this was the moment of truth – if she gives the bill back to a member of *Manuel's* family, she is indicating that she is NOT in favor of the marriage. If she gives the bill to a member of HER family, then she is indicating that she IS in favor of the marriage. Moda (as was expected) gave the bill to her father!! She had accepted the marriage proposal!!! At this point, all of Manuel's aunts and sisters started shrilling at the top of their lungs in celebration and dancing around Moda for a few minutes.

After the men quieted the women down a bit, Moda's family offered a formal meal to our extended family. Mind you, the family of the bride didn't actually partake of the food that they had prepared; actually, they left us alone to eat by ourselves while they divided the various foodstuffs that we had brought for their family. After we had finished eating, we invited Moda's mother and grandmother (the representatives of all the women of their family) and Clemente again counted out – bill by bill -- 125,000 CFCA (around \$250) – as a token of saying: "The food was really delicious!!" Interestingly enough, the 125,000 CFCA/\$250 didn't actually "count" as part of the dowry-price of 500,000/\$1,000. If you're still doing the math, Manuel still owes 250,000 CFCA (\$500) to complete the dowry price.

....Dowry Story continued

Therefore, according to Fang tradition, Manuel and Moda are now officially married (even though the full amount of the dowry hasn't been paid); however, the two will postpone living together until they celebrate their Christian wedding in the church – a practice that has been increasing among the Christian community here in EG over the last several years. All in all, our first dowry presentation was definitely a success (two Christian young people coming together!) as well as an eye-opening cultural experience!!

Family Pictures and our Namesakes



Far Left:
Obama and
“Obamito” (little
Obama) at a
wedding; also
known occasionally
as Kenyon and
Dad.

Left:
Jason with baby
Jason.

In EG, everybody
has an official
name and a
“nombre de la
casa” (house
name) that they go
by. **World --**
meet perhaps the
first Fang baby
ever known as
Jason.
(Jason is his house
name). His mother
is a young woman
from the church.



Left: Kenyon.

Below: Lisa and Lisa.

Unbeknownst to us at the time, a member of
the WEC-related church was pregnant during
our visit to EG in 2004 and decided to name
Lisa after Lisa. Lisa is now 4 years old.



2008: The Year in Review

*****Highlight for Jason:** Teaching at Centro Bíblico Bata (CBB) training pastors and leaders to interpret, apply, and base ministries on the Word of God.

*****Lowlight for Jason:** After an attempted break-in of the house, we had a “successful” break-in to our car (smashed the window and robbed the radio). We since have hired a night guard, something we didn’t want to do but finally felt was necessary.

*****Highlight for Lisa:** All things Kenyon. My growing relationship with the women of the church, giving talks at different conferences/seminars, and hosting, along with Jason, a discipleship group of youth at our house every Sunday afternoon.

*****Lowlight for Lisa:** The reality of sickness which occasionally visits our own family; when our 3rd puppy (Suki) actually died in my arms; the witchdoctors keeping us up at night.

*****Highlight for Kenyon:** Playing outside with his **2 dogs (Simba and Sasha)**, chasing away all the **roosters** that make their way near our house (including our very own pet rooster – unnamed because we will eventually eat him), and the recent arrival of **Mario the (Titi) Monkey**. (And yes, Mario was named after the current Miami Heat starting point guard and former Kansas Jayhawk who made the single greatest shot in NCAA Tournament Finals History to eventually propel the Jayhawks to the Championship...just sayin’...).

*****Lowlight for Kenyon:** Going to bed each and every night. The escape of our Chameleon after only 3 days as a pet.

Random Facts

***Obama’s presidential victory was celebrated in EQ primarily because Obama is a common Fang name; since Jason is known in EG as Jason Obama, he was congratulated on “his” victory about a hundred times. For some reason, the joke never got old to Jason’s friends.

***We spent New Year’s Day on a small island off the EG coast called Corisco. Highlights of the trip included 2.5 hours in a motorized canoe to reach the island from a southern coastal village, seeing a small octopus and stingray on the island, and staying with the traditional Chief of the island from the Benga tribe. [Did you get that – we stayed with an African Chief!?!]

***Kenyon is now speaking probably 80% in Spanish and 20% in English while understanding both languages.

Please drop us an email to let us know how you’re doing!!! Thanks for your prayers and encouragement as well as your financial support during difficult times.

**With much love and appreciation,
Jason, Lisa, and Kenyon**

**Missionaries to
Equatorial Guinea**

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