



Journey to Tanzania: Reporter Exposes Epidemic of Albino Killings

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By **REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK BY JUJU CHANG**

MWANZA, Tanzania, Oct. 2, 2009



-  I had just 24 hours to prepare for my trip to Africa. We had been reporting on the [killing of Tanzanians with albinism](#), a genetic condition characterized by a lack of pigment in people's eyes, skin and hair, as part of an [ABC News hour special](#).
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In Tanzania, there has been a grotesque [rash of albino killings](#): 54 people have been murdered since 2007, though observers say more incidences go unreported. Renegade witch doctors have convinced locals that there are magical properties in the blood, bones and skin of people with albinism, which has created a sickening black market where the limb of an albino can bring in anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000. In a country where the per capita income is roughly \$450 a year, that's a macabre fortune.

Eager to meet Tanzanians with albinism, I got ready in a whirlwind. I had to get malaria pills, a nasty trio of vaccines and a tetanus booster in less than 24 hours. I ran to Patagonia in a panic. I braced my three young sons and their slightly anxious father for the fact that they'd have to get along without me for a week. Then I dove into our closets in search of baseball hats and toys. I've seen poverty and deprivation on trips before and I always end up wishing I had brought something along for the kids I met. I packed a huge duffel bag full of extra baby clothes, toys and "life-saving" hats.

I say "life-saving" because on average albinos in Tanzania die of painful skin cancer in their thirties, having been unprotected for a lifetime under the scorching African sun. With a collection of hats and a camera in tow, we set off on our journey to Africa.

Navigating Rural Tanzania

We traveled to Tanzania and interviewed the family of a girl with albinism who was murdered.

Getting there wasn't easy. Driving through rural Tanzania after some heavy rain is a bone-jarring adventure; 5 kilometers can take 30 minutes to traverse. The muddy craters that make up the roads here make you marvel at the shock absorbers on a 4-wheel drive ... and appreciate the smooth highways back home.

During the less bumpy part of the drive, James Mitchell, a veteran ABC News cameraman based in South Africa, doubled as a fabulous tour guide, leading us through the Rift Valley and ultimately to meet the family of Eunice Bahati -- an 11-

year-old girl with albinism who was butchered in the family's two-room mud hut -- only one room away from her two sisters.

[Click here to find out how to help Tanzanians with albinism](#)

The two surviving sisters, who also have albinism, told the tale of the attack with a haunted look in their eyes. Traumatized, they told us they were too afraid to sleep at night, too terrified to walk the two miles to school each way -- having heard an unspeakable violence.

Eunice's younger sister Shida proudly showed me some of her tattered homework. I can't help, but think of my children back home with a pang of guilt. I'm grateful that I brought a little something -- toys and hats -- to give Shida and the other children.

Our journey continued. We overnighted in a small, very modest and rustic Catholic convent where bathing involves a plastic bucket of hot water. After 12 hours an hour flight, a ferry ride across Lake Victoria and a marathon dusty road trip with open windows and no A/C ...it was the best shower I'd had in a long, long time.

Life for Tanzanians with Albinism

On a visit to the Mitindo Primary school in rural Tanzania, I met children with albinism, who escaped the [threat of violence](#), but are still very much in endangered by the sun. The children with albinism at Mitindo Primary school have leathery skin. It looks and feels calloused from all the scabbed-over sunburns.

The school, which serves as a refuge from the gruesome attacks, is a rare ray of hope in this country, but without books, paper or writing utensils, it needs more help. We passed out hats, clothes and toys, but hundreds of children -- some with albinism, some without -- live in grinding poverty. The albino children live, two to a single bunk -- each draped with mosquito netting -- with a backpack full of possessions hanging over it, which serve as make-shift dresser drawers.



Many of the children here are born into families where the father has abandoned them because of the [taboo of albinism](#). It's considered a curse on the family. The mothers often struggle, mightily working to care for these children. Several children at the school tell me their mothers come to visit when they can.

I sat speechless when I saw one baby's mouth, black with scabs where his lips should be. He was just 3-years-old and was sitting on a teenage student's lap. His parents had brought him here to escape the threat of violence, but his care was basically left to the other students. It makes your soul ache to bear witness to their suffering.

[Click here to find out how to help Tanzanians with albinism](#)

Attacks on Albinos

The attacks on albinos in Tanzania are often carried out with machetes. The weapons, left over from wars, are used in daily life with nonchalance. In a traffic jam one day, a man pushed a herd of cows, hitting them with the flat of a machete.

Weapons are also used by bandits to hijack cars and buses on the highway. Along the Burundi, Rwanda border in northern Tanzania, where poverty pervades, we hear about bandits hijacking and carrying out untold violence. While I wasn't thrilled about travelling with men with submachine guns, I'm now very happy to have the protection of armed guards.

We met up with the local chief of police -- en route to patrol for bandits. He was also

the lead investigator in the brutal beating of Mariamu Stanford, 28, a single mother with albinism from rural Tanzania, who we were on our way to interview.

Mariamamu is just one of two Tanzanians with albinism known to have survived the gruesome attacks.

"The killers are too cruel...they cut you while you're alive," the police chief told us. "It is a slow pain death, but to Mariamu, she was luck[y]."

Though Mariamu lost both her arms, she maintained her spirit. You can see my interview with Mariamu on "20/20" tonight. It is a visit that will stay with me forever.

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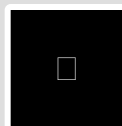


As Trump visits Iowa, farmers warn 'patience is wearing thin' on tariff fight

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By **ALEXANDER MALLIN**

Arlington, Iowa — Jul 26, 2018, 12:28 PM ET





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Pig prices are plunging – so, too, those of American soybeans.



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America's heartland farmers, in states largely supportive of President [Donald Trump](#), say they are starting to feel real financial pain from a tit-for-tat trade war Trump once promised will be "easy to win."

"We have loss of confidence in our products and we have loss of price," said hog farmer Gregg Hora of Fort Dodge, Iowa. "Pig farmers are currently losing about \$25-30 per pig."



Gregg Hora, president of the Iowa Pork Producers Association, says a trade war wit... [more +](#)

After Trump slapped steep new tariffs on imports of foreign steel and aluminum earlier this year, China, Mexico, and the European Union imposed retaliatory tariffs on billions of dollars US goods – from bourbon, Harley Davidson motorbikes and orange juice to dairy products, soybeans and pork.

“Patience is wearing thin on U.S. pork producers because the next six months of market prices – there’s a lot of red ink,” Hora said. “We need the administration to come to these deals quickly.”

While Wall Street expressed relief Wednesday with word from the White House that a trade fight with Europe would not escalate, many farmers remain anxious. Existing tariffs still remain in place and the announcement did not resolve Chinese sanctions on American pork and soy which have had the biggest bite.



Alex Mallin/ABC News

Iowa pig farmers say they are losing \$25 to \$30 per pig because of plunging prices r...[more +](#)

"I think it's a sign of progress," corn and soybean farmer Mark Recker of Arlington, Iowa, said of the president's announcement on E.U. talks. "We need more details with these things because it's so much in flux and they change from day to day."

President Trump visited Peosta, Iowa, just west of Dubuque on Thursday to tour a community college and host a panel on workforce development. But it was not clear how much face-to-face time he would get with farmers like Recker who say they're already feeling the pinch from Trump's trade war.

"There's no doubt the tariffs have had a very powerful effect to the downside on our prices," said Recker, who serves as president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association.



Mark Recker, president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, says his corn and so... [more +](#)

Farmers face a nearly 20 percent drop in the price of soybean harvests this year and more than 15 percent drop in the price of corn, according to the Association. The new tariffs are seen as the primary cause.

The White House this week announced a \$12 billion emergency aid package of direct payments to farmers impacted by the trade war and indirect support through government purchase of surplus inventories.



Alex Mallin/ABC News

Gregg Hora of Fort Dodge, Iowa, says farmers are anxious about the financial impa... [more +](#)

“It’s a handout, it’s not something we earned,” said Rick Juchems, a corn, soybean and hog farmer in Plainfield, Iowa. “I would just as soon have access to free markets and let’s earn what we get.”

Juchems, who says he didn’t vote in the 2016 election, gives President Trump leeway to resolve the crisis – but says his patience is not unlimited.



Farmers face a nearly 20 percent drop in the price of soybean harvests this year an... [more +](#)

“I’m not opposed to what he’s doing. It’s just really hard when you’re trying to make a living,” Juchems said. “I think it would be healthy in the long run, in the short run it may be a little tight.”

As Trump looks to shore up support for a re-election bid, Recker says lowans will want to see results from the president’s promise that farmers will gain financially from the trade negotiations.



The White House this week announced a \$12 billion emergency aid package of dire... [more +](#)

“This is what he campaigned on and this is what he's talked about as being president -- that he's going to disrupt trade,” Recker said. “And I think farmers have been willing to give the president latitude as far as how he handles trade. But now it's hitting close to home, the reality is here, lower prices, we're going into the fall with a larger crop it looks like and we're going to have questions about where are our opportunities for profitability coming now?”

ABC News' Devin Dwyer contributed to this report.

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