



Looking back over the last 10 years since our first Container Library & Learning Centre: Story 10

My Own Story

This feels rather strange and deeply, deeply personal. Staring at a blank page, starting to write about myself. But I guess, in order for you to understand the life of JBAC, you should have an inkling about who I am. I am my mum's daughter (my biological father wasn't in the picture and my step-dad didn't come till I was a teenager). My mum ensured that I can take care of myself from pretty early age. It was because of her that I ended up in the UK. She wanted more for me. And it was because of her belief, even if others laughed, that I can travel and see the world even if the communists made it pretty much impossible.

But my mum was ill all her life. So while I lived in the UK, I was making sure that I have a good job so I can safe for her healthcare if she ever needed it. My job was to ensure that my mum never had to worry - about me or about her own future. As a relatively bright student I was destined to work in an office. I hated and I still hate offices. 9 to 5 destroys my sole. But I took on office jobs as that was expected. Except when I moved to the UK people were less keen to give me a job in an office. My qualifications were ignored and I had to start all over again.

In this part of my life, if I don't count my lovingly supportive husband, I've met three people that changed the course of my life. The first worked at Office Angels, a temp agency who saw past the Eastern Block and placed me in my very first proper job (until then I sold windows (yes I was one of those), worked in McDs and scheduled your gas boiler maintenance) in Westminster University. I started teaching and 9-5 was a bit more bearable. The next person was working for NorthHerts College. She too saw that I have more knowledge than it is required to attend one of the basic Access to Education courses. She enrolled me as a home student saving me thousands of pounds. Sadly, her efforts came undone when six weeks from the end of the first year I was asked to pay the full amount, which I could not afford, nor was I willing to continue. The course was torture.

A chance meeting in Sainsbury's where she remembered who I was and gave me a chance to explain why I quit and she was on the phone securing a place for me at NHC for Business. This allowed me to apply for yet a better job. Next meeting with a professor at Leicester University led me to complete my MSc in Climate Change and Sustainable Development. At this point I was studying for way over 26 years. It was time to take a break. A year out to travel the world - a childhood dream fulfilled! But as soon as we came

back I applied and got a scholarship for my doctorate. I surprised myself by writing a thesis on people and their behaviour. I always thought I was more of an animal, nature lover.

While studying for my PhD my mum and my step-dad became ill. Neither saw me graduate. My mum was laid to rest in August 2012, I quit my office job in November and travelled to Kenya. JBAC started in February 2013. It is true when they warn you about making life-changing decision when you are in crisis. Mourning both parents certainly classifies as crises. But blind and death to all warnings, I was sure I have everything under control. And I am a doctor after all.

The plan was to help children in Kenya to be, well, children. Have the chance to experience childhood like I had. I travelled. I skied. I rode horses. I performed in Circus. I read and I laughed and I played. All thanks to my mum. Why wouldn't I invest what she left me in helping other children to experience a fraction of what I did. This will take, what three years, than I return to... What exactly? I lost a sense of who I am. I lost my identity. I had no one to take care of. Now, I know this sounds strange as I have a husband, but he can take of himself. We take care of each other. But with my mum, it was different. I was looking after her since I was six. Even from a distance.

And so when three years came and went I was still not ready to give it up. It took five years before I could step back and a question "what have I done?" kept ringing in my ears. I love JBAC. Don't take me wrong. But it wasn't, isn't, paying me anything. At least not to be able to live on. So why do I still do it? Because it is a fantastic cause. It is an easy model to follow. It's mine and it certainly not 9 to 5. It allows me to travel. It enables me to my degree to practice. It helps people. It is an environmentally kind project. It's innovative too and reflects people's needs. But also because if I stop, how do I stop all the books coming to DCs. If I stop, I have to face the question of what to do next? I know now that office work is definitely out of the question.

Bottom line is, I am not ready to walk away. My project isn't finished. I job isn't done. I just need to find a way for it to pay my wages. Simple. Well, it didn't work in the last twelve years, but you know what I mean.