

Dear Ngajyo Jmabu-uhah,

How is my favorite, starving, 12-year old Pen Pal from an impoverished, barren, stark, desolate, Third World township doing this year? Good, I hope! Did you have a fun New Year's Eve? As is customary, we here in America set off rockets and fireworks and blew things up to celebrate the fact that the new year was going to have the next sequential number. Which reminds me, I hope you didn't get bombed again by Nambotswia, as seems to happen a lot, according to your letters. Speaking of which, I was told by my Pen Pal Administrator to only write about cheerful subjects in these letters, but your notes seem to be a bit, shall we say, mopey. So if you could stop complaining a little bit in your letters, that would be great. And running a spellchecker wouldn't hurt, either! Thank you much! ☺

Anyhoo, as I'm sure is on the tip of all your underused tongues, the whole world is abuzz over the Academy Award nominations. Can you believe that Pietro Scalia was nominated in the Best Editing category for "Black Hawk Down" when it's so obvious that Edward Richards and Mary Shields edited circles around him in "Mulholland Drive"? Just plain crazy, huh? Well, I know I don't have to tell you that something like this happens every year!

I hope your goat hasn't died.

My half birthday is July 6th. I'm hoping to get a digital camera so I can take pictures of everything I own and then look at the pictures of everything I own. Or maybe a Stairmaster exercise machine so I can pretend that I'm walking up stairs, without having to walk up stairs.

Did you get that new piece of straw you wanted for your birthday? Your birthday was last year sometime, wasn't it?

As I do every year, I am having a huge **WrestleMania party** at my apartment. Since you haven't come any other years (because you weren't invited), and I feel safe that you won't be coming to this one, I can tell you that it's on **Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm**. I live at **98.6 Averagetemperature Street**, and my phone number is **109-901-6969** (but I have call screening, so there's no sense in you trying to get through).

How are your 23 brothers and sisters? I hope it's your turn to wear the shoe soon.

I've had a very trying weekend here, as I am in the process of evaluating the contents of my filled-to-the-brim refrigerator. Twice a week, I go through it and throw out any food that has been there for over 2 days or that is starting to look like Bea Arthur's ear. Well, actually, I don't do the throwing away, of course; I have someone come in and do it for me. But still, it is very trying.

Do sticks taste good?

I had an epiphany recently that I have too many possessions for where I live. They just all won't fit in here, don't you know. So every few nights over the last month, I've been putting some of it out on the sidewalk, and it's gone by morning. I don't even want to think about what happens to it. Can you imagine anyone who would take a couch that others have sat on or a tailored suit that's over a year old? Please!

Is the 2-inch by 2-inch hole in the side of your dung hut from where the rhinoceros gored your grandfather into it working good as a window? I told you it would!

I just had a complete physical, and the doctor said I am in almost perfect health. But she thought that maybe I was getting the very first signs of crow's feet by one eye, so I'll be going in for cosmetic surgery soon. Please pray for me.

How is your tooth?

I'm collecting the new state quarters. I already have all of 1999's (Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut), 2000's (Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, and Virginia), and 2001's (New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Kentucky). I will save them forever and never spend them, because collecting money and just letting it sit there and staring at it from time to time is fun, don't you think?

Do you think you'll ever get bacteria-free running water?

The fallout here in San Francisco from all the dotcom failures continues. Who could have imagined that visionary ideas like [www.e-pork.com](http://www.e-pork.com) and [www.talking-sock-puppets-teach-your-gifted-child-esperanto.com](http://www.talking-sock-puppets-teach-your-gifted-child-esperanto.com) would not make instant multi-millionaires out of literally everybody? That's just not fair! I know you join me in feeling sorry for all of the unfortunate 24-year olds who now have to go out and get a job.

Have you been able to teach all those flies to do tricks yet?

I'm sure you've been following the golf this year. Who hasn't, right? I think that Scott McCarron and Jim Furyk are the ones to watch, don't you? Tiger Woods seems to be in a bit of a slump so far. I bet he hasn't even won more than one or two million dollars yet. I know, I know, I can hear you over there saying "I am Tiger Woods!"

Believe me, medicine is VERY overrated - I think you're on to something with that rubbing your sores with dirt idea.

You might want to get ready to update your address book, as I just started working at a very prestigious high tech company in the financial district. I might give you the address and phone number later. The hours are great, and I'm making lots of money.

I'm sorry to hear that the lions ate your parents. If it's any consolation, my parents bore me.

As I'm sure you've been following and wondering how it affected me, the California lottery was recently up to \$193,000,000. But of course I didn't win, or I wouldn't still be writing to you! Ha, ha, ha! Just kidding. Ha, ha! But you know what? I read that after taxes and everything, the winner really only gets about \$65,000,000! I know, that's criminal, isn't it?! Can you even imagine only being left with \$65,000,000 after you took the time and energy to walk 50 yards to the corner and plunk down a dollar! Sometimes life just isn't fair.

That's good news that your toilet/hole in the ground is 15 miles away uphill through alligator-infested waters and gorilla breeding grounds, as hiking, swimming, and running are the best exercises!

Okay, I gotta go now – I'm late for my Jazzercise! Send me an email!

Your Pen Pal,

Mike