

Work is Worship

Sent to the United States by the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda, Billy Ruhweza has spent the last six months climbing, training, cleaning, and rappelling off of the House of Worship in Wilmette.

Reflecting on his time working and serving at the Mother Temple of the West, Billy is filled with gratitude and appreciation:

Q: Billy, how long have you been in the United States and why did you choose to come to Wilmette?

I have been in the United States for almost six months. The National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda asked me to come to Wilmette to train on Temple maintenance and cleaning. I am learning how to clean and fix the House of Worship, things such as washing the dome, chalking, and fixing leaks. This is so that there will be someone in Uganda who will be able to do these things for the Temple there when it needs to be done. The Universal House of Justice solely pays for the maintenance and fixing of the Temple in Uganda, therefore this saves the international fund money, as well.

Q: Had you done any previous work on the House of Worship in Uganda?

I worked on the House of Worship in Uganda previously. Climbing the Temple there requires real rope climbing; it is not as easy as it is here to get the top of the Temple. I have been learning how to rock climb since I have been in the U.S. in places such as Arizona, North Carolina and Yosemite National Park in California; in total I have visited twenty-two states.

Q: Do you have a fear of heights?

I have no fear of heights at all. Rappelling off of the House of Worship is similar to rappelling off of a rock. Of course, working on the House of Worship, as a Bahá'í, you understand that it's not just an ordinary building that you are climbing. To me it reminds me of what the Faith says about work as a form of worship. It is very fitting for this job. It is exciting because it is fun, but it is also exciting because you are worshipping God.

Q: What does the House of Worship (in Wilmette) mean to you?

I have visited a few Temples and worked on two of them (Uganda and United States). It is very special because you make friends in the Visitors Center in Wilmette, people who have worked there for years and have never had an

experience going to the top of the Temple. They've never had a reason to. You have a neat perspective from the top. You are able to see how much work has been done when you are up there. You really see where the Kingdom Project funds are going. It is a unique architectural building.

It was told to me that the Temple in Uganda contains some very special artifacts. That the earth which was dug up for the resting place of Baha'u'llah was asked by Shoghi Effendi to be sent to the House of Worship in Uganda. I learned that it is underneath the Temple in the earth there. Also, I was told that the pieces of plaster which were falling off of the ceiling in The Báb's prison cell in Máh-ku are also at the House of Worship in Uganda. These, to me, make it very special and holy.

Q: What has been your most memorable experience being in the United States?

Surprisingly, the Black Men's Gathering was the most memorable experience for me. I don't know why. It is a very unusual experience. It is impossible to really describe what takes place there. The men share their lives, their love, and everyone is willing to share and listen. You see a total transformation from day one with the people that attend. You're so overwhelmed with all the deepenings, you receive an amazingly profound understanding of what you are reading. It's very rich. It makes me want to come back every year, insha'llah. You don't want it to end. It is one week, and before it's through you're already looking forward to the next year's meeting.