



emp·ty





The D503 is a remote track in Namibia's far South-eastern Kalahari. But even here you will find small cattle stations, where white farmers and their black helpers are eking out a living. In one of those farms I met these two men: Matthew and Albert. They showed me their basic living quarters and overall made a pretty unhappy impression.

Albert tells me he comes all the way from Rundu, far up north, where his wife and 4 kids live. He makes only 800 or 900 N\$ a month (approx. 60 Euros). Albert asks for reading material, because the only thing he has is a 'Visit Namibia guide' from 1999 and a German Golfers magazine, also from last century...

Namibia became fully independent from South Africa in 1990, but life on some of the white-owned farms is still heavily reminiscent of the days of apartheid, especially in the South. Many black workers' rights only exist on paper and they are struggling in the most basic conditions.















## Marc Knip

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During the first part of the trip I felt uncomfortable whenever we met people. The rich man meeting the poor, that stuff. I felt the urge to give them something, to hand out gifts to level the inequality. But then, gradually, I began to realise that this huge gap between *them* and *me* that I constantly felt, wasn't something real. More than anything, it was something I created myself.

Some of the local people were really interested and happy to see us. Others couldn't care less. But whatever their reaction: our encounters were simply between two human beings – nothing more, nothing less. I began to see that I was the one thinking in terms of rich and poor; that it was me who constantly felt the contradiction between endless opportunities versus zero opportunities.

It all became much more pleasant and easy when I came to accept that. It enabled me to really connect with people instead of just looking at them.

My first close encounter with a brown hyena, during a pitch dark night at the campfire, not only left me petrified. There was something else, something I hadn't felt before (and which came back many times during our trip).

Moments like these got me in touch with some deep primal sensation, a mixture of feelings deeper and stronger than anything else. Fear of these completely wild animals. Enormous respect for nature. Amazement at the infinity of the country we were travelling. And an intense love for all this beauty.

My campfires became better each night. I learned to read tracks and spot wild animals. And although I still feel there is so much more to learn, something essential changed, because I started on a new journey. In our civilised world man has evolved from a hunter into a clown that worries about charging his iPhone – and the same goes for me. In Namibia there were moments that I felt the existence of this prehistoric man, fully connected with his environment, with planet Earth. And the most intriguing is that I felt his presence inside myself!

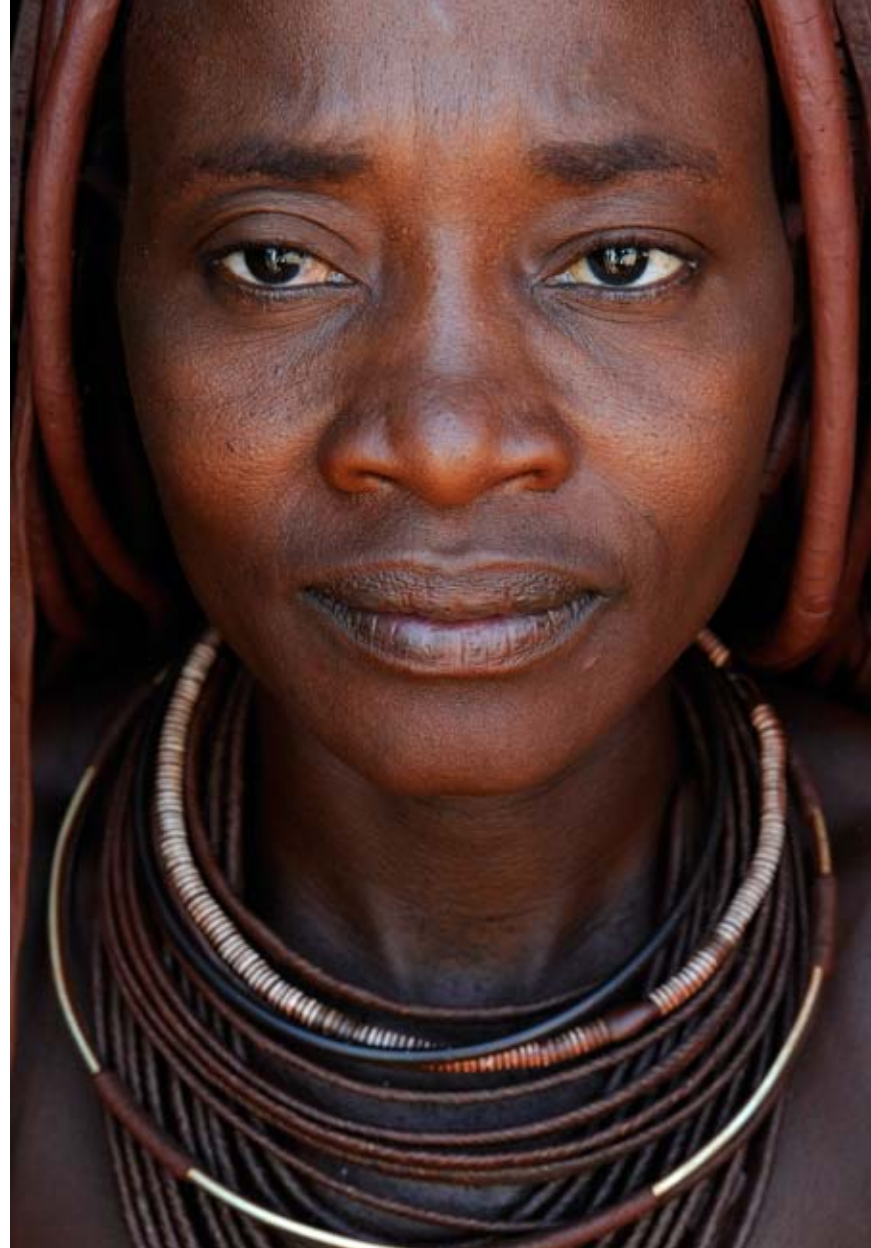




























\\ If you Google the words 'African children' you immediately end up in a world of *saving, helping, empowering* and *educating*. The general perception in the West seems to be that children in Africa have a terrible life full of pain and suffering, wars and diseases.

This is not my impression of Africa at all. If you travel through the continent, you're going to meet a lot of kids. Even in Namibia - one of the least densely populated countries in the world - you will encounter children in the strangest places and at the most unexpected moments.

What always strikes me is this lovely blend of purity and innocence, which may be typical for children in general, but seems to be even more intense here. Kids come to you like young animals: curious, cheerful and happy. There may be a touch of fear and slight hesitation at first, but curiosity always wins.











**Fear doesn't prevent death, it prevents life.**

Naguib Mahfouz