FROM A CHANCE MEETING IN THE CONGO

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A lovely piece of writing about a wonderful city, the gift of an international, multicultural life and family, but, above all, a letter from a new father to a baby girl.
Category: Observations

Years ago, I made a trip to Brazzaville toÂ lead some planning meetings regarding Bible translation work in four Central African countries. As is often the case, I was asked if I would be willing to carry a package that couldn't be trusted to the mail; in this case, a new digital recorder for the BBC reporter who actually worked out of our offices in Brazza.

That's how I met John James, one of life's nice guys. Over a meal by the Congo river, we chatted about acquaintances we had in common back in the UK. However, what John really wanted to talk about was Abidjan. The BBC were sending him there and he was eager for any knowledge or contacts that I could share about the city which had once been my home.

That was seven or eight years ago and I've not seen John since, but we've stayed in touch through social media and from time-to-time, I would hear his voice on the BBC radio; From our Own Correspondent, or The Today Programme.Â In the meantime, John settled into life in Abidjan to such an extent that he married an Ivorian and gained two teenage daughters in the process.

In the last few week, John and his wife, TherÃ¨se had a daughter and John has penned a letter to this multicultural little girl, which he posted on his blog. Normally, when I link to articles by others, I put a few quotes here, but this time I'm not going to do that, I really want you to read the whole thing, not just a few extracts. I honestly believe that this is one of the best, if not the best, pieces of writing on cross-cultural living that I have ever come across. Please read it.

Please.