

## Journal entries

### August 13, 2017

It's been a crazy change going from life in California to life in Botswana. I had a moment this morning where I was really missing home. I figured that I was missing the people I spent my time with and the predictability of my daily routine, but when I thought about what I was feeling even more, I realized that above all, I missed being comfortable. I miss comfort of being surrounded by my closest friends and family. I miss the comfort of showering. I miss knowing the social norms. I miss knowing how to speak the native language. I miss knowing what to expect.

I then came to realize the issue with this. I've always believed that growth happened when you push yourself out of your comfort zone. This is actually a belief of mine that I picked up from my first, and only international trip before this one, to Nicaragua. I've always preached to myself to strive to seek new, different experiences, and here I am, doing that, and I am feeling really thrown off my bearings and I'm really struggling with it. I know this is normal, and this is something I've always wanted to do, but it's not like anything I would've imagined it to be.

I'd like to clarify that these differences aren't bad. They're just different... for example, water and electricity is intermittent. I take bucket showers. Bugs are everywhere in my hostel. Animals, such as chickens, donkeys, and cows that freely roam around. They are actually one of the leading causes of death—car collisions with animals. They drive on the left side of the road, but in the right side of the car. Their diet mainly consists of corn and meat, whereas, I'm used to fresh fruits and vegetables. Even more different is the standard of living. Most people in D'kar live in poverty, but similarly to what I found in Nicaragua, people seem happy. Houses look no larger than a bedroom. The poorer homes are built out of irregular wooden branches, cemented together by a mixture of donkey dung and sand, and the nice ones are built with cement blocks. They have no running water and electricity is too expensive. They cook outside with handmade fires. Some will grow their own food. Their version of a bathroom is away from their home in the brush. There are no refrigeration nor stoves. This contrast between life here and life at home makes me realize how excessive my life is. However, compare myself to wealthy people in the states, and I have nothing. So... this view of life and what is considered a norm and considered a necessity in life goes back to perspective. So if it's all about perspective, it puts into question what really is considered necessary?

Not only am I surrounded by many differences, but I've also noticed many similarities to home.

One similarity is meals. A meal consisting of some sort of grain to fill you up and a meat dish is fairly standard in the states. Also, church. Uniting over some sort of religion seems to be universal as well. At the church service I attended today, I felt the same types of emotions and energy I felt at other services I have attended in the post. (the church songs were absolutely breathtaking.) Another similarity is this idea of community. Everyone here seems very close and there is a lot of good energy that seems to be found in shared spaces, such as the church. Also, homelessness. When we were at the grocery store, two men asked us for money and food.

Music. I heard some Botswanan-South African rap music that was pretty catchy! Also heard some Carly Rae Jepsen on our walk around the village. That's all I can think of for now. But it's just interesting living in a place where life can be so different, but similar at the same time.

### **August 31, 2017**

International aid is something that is so tricky, and throughout this trip I've been struggling to understand what my place is within development and how I can truly help others. Historically, international aid has failed, and I think it largely ties into this idea presented in this proverb: If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

From my understanding, development has failed because we simply give fish out; we don't teach how to fish. In the same way, we pour money and resources into a place, and they become dependent on it. All of the money and resources we've contributed to the growth and development of other countries has never been sustainable because it doesn't grow social and economic capital of a country.

With this idea in mind, I have been very conscious about how I choose to help others within the community. I don't want to just give money to people; I'd rather help them learn some skill in which they can use to go earn money for themselves. This has been tricky to do because people have shared with me their hardships here in D'kar, which makes me feel for them. I can't help but care about them so I want to help. And since I've come here to help them, they view me as someone who is full of wealth, which is why I've gotten requests for tea, sugar, and other things. It's tough because I'm also on a budget too, so as much as I want to help others, I am not made of money, and I don't see how giving someone sugar would help them in the long-term. What people here demand of me sometimes puts me in an uncomfortable position. I feel selfish for not wanting to give them sugar and I feel judgmental for not feeling like sugar will make any impact at all. I feel guilty, but I also know that I'm on a budget too, and following it is just being realistic. I've always strived to be selfless, but I do also believe that there is a balance and one can only give so much.

With this kind of development work, I can see how it's important to establish from the get-go what my role is and what I can provide. Being conscious and careful about what my role is is important in ensuring my time here is one that makes a sustainable impact.

### **September 1, 2017**

Today we hitched a ride with some people into town because we needed to go to the bank to get money to pay for rent. They dropped us off at the bank and told us to meet them at the Kalahari Arms Hotel when we were done. We called and asked them how long they'd be and they said 10-15 minutes. The wait ended up being more than an hour. Also, I was expecting the excursion to take an hour or two but it ended up taking nearly 6 hours—which was basically our entire day. Furthermore, we may agree on a time to meet and do work, but people here are generally 15 min-1 hour late. These experiences highlight miscommunication in regards to time and timeliness that I think stem from cultural differences. Back at home I'm used to living a lifestyle in which I am

always on the go. There are days where I have things booked every hour of the day, so 15 minutes makes a difference. When I'm here I find myself getting frustrated at others for being untimely because I come from an environment where being late is unacceptable. However, here in D'kar, it's okay. There are people here who will ask to meet you in the morning or afternoon... In my book, morning can be anywhere from 6am to 11am, and so saying "morning" isn't specific enough for me to be able to plan out my day, but for people here, they get it. Being untimely ultimately has resulted in slow progress, which is another thing that doesn't work back at home. College is fast-paced and you can't afford to be slow, so living this way is not something that I'm used to. When I look past my irritableness of the situation and realize that these are differences in culture, it really begins to fascinate me. I get to live in a way that's completely different from what I've known.

Traveling is like getting the opportunity to find your favorite color. Imagine your way of life and the set of values and beliefs are all collectively one color—let's say black. Before you travel, perhaps all you've ever seen and know of is the color black. This makes it hard to really decide whether or not you like black because you've never seen any other color. When you travel, you get to immerse yourself in a different culture and life gets to be different. Let's consider this new life like the color white. Now that you've seen white, you can compare black and white and see which one you like better.

The world is full of different ways of living and being, and different values and beliefs. In the same way, there are so many different colors, in addition to all of the different tints, hues, shades, so on and so forth. Traveling makes life more colorful, and only once you have traveled can you truthfully determine what our favorite color is.

Living in D'kar and understanding their culture, values, and way of life has given me the ability to question the culture, values, and way of life that I've only ever known in California.