

Posh Corps Podcast Ep. 20: Connection

Narration:

In July of 2017, I rode on a rickety old fishing boat as it bounced wildly from wave to wave on the rough waters of the South Pacific. Stinging rain pelted my face as I held on for dear life. The bow of the boat struck a particularly tall wave. I popped out of my seat and came down hard on my tailbone.

Narration:

Taylor, one of my local guides was sitting next to me. She yelled in my ear, told me to turn around and put my back to the rain. I carefully rotated my body toward the stern. I briefly imagine being thrown from the boat and striking the water face first.

Narration:

The captain of this small craft, a young man of 18 or 19, grinned maniacally as we turned to face him. He spurred the engine on just a little bit harder and the boat seemed to bounce off each wave crest.

Narration:

"I think he's trying to impress you," yelled Taylor.

Narration:

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Narration:

I was on my way to Rabi Island. Rabi is technically one of the easternmost islands of Fiji, but in many ways it might as well be another country. There is almost no cell service, no internet, no regular ferry, and there are certainly no travel guides.

Narration:

That's why I was going. Ostensibly I was going to Rabi to scout for a documentary, but I was also looking for disconnection. I wanted to go to a place that wasn't connected to the cloud, a place that wasn't featured and filtered in millions of social media posts by duck-faced influencers. I wanted to go to a place that didn't have restaurants on Yelp or lists of things to do on TripAdvisor.

Narration:

I was looking for a feeling that I hadn't had since I served in Peace Corps in South Africa. I wanted to experience the surprise, the exhilaration, and sometimes the fear of being in a place where help is more than just a phone call away. I wanted to go to a place where the highs are very high and the lows are very low.

Narration:

There was no information online about how to get to Rabi Island, so I sought out local Peace Corps volunteers. That's how I met Taylor. She lived in a village right at the edge of Vanua Levu, the second largest Island of Fiji. Rabi Island was within sight of her village, but this was the first time she had actually visited. Our 12-mile cruise was supposed to take about an hour by fishing boat, but our daredevil captain cut the travel time down to 20 minutes.

Narration:

As we approached our destination, the rain ceased. The sun peered through the clouds. The captain cut the engine about 30 feet from the shore. We got out and hauled our bags to the beach. The sand was covered in litter. "I heard about this," said Taylor. "They don't take care of their trash here." The litter was a sign of a vast cultural divide between the people of Rabi and the people of the Vanua Levu, just a few miles apart. The people who live on Rabi today are not ethnically Fijian. They are Micronesian. They originally lived some 1300 miles North on Banaba Island. The Banabans were forcibly relocated to Rabi after World War II and they've been there ever since. The Banabans were the first people in the Pacific to be completely relocated to a new environment.

Narration:

I thought their story might serve as a guide for the people of other Island nations should sea level rise force them to relocate. We hired one of the informal public taxis and made our way north to the end of the island. We were staying in Tawawa village. With some 600 inhabitants, it's the most densely populated village on the island.

Rabi Resident:

Maori maori.

Taylor:

I am Taylay.

Rabi Resident:

Oh, so you're people from where?

Taylor:

We're originally both from America.

Alan:

But she lives in...

Taylor:

I live in Vanua Levu. You know where Vanuvatu is?

Rabi Resident:

Oh, okay.

Taylor:

I live in Vunikura.

Rabi Resident:

How did you come over?

Posh Corps Podcast Ep. 20: Connection

Alan:

We took the fishing boat today with Wana.

Taylor:

Yeah, and he's filming a documentary about Banaba.

Rabi Resident:

Oh.

Narration:

Yeah, yeah. So I'm shooting the village right now.

Rabi Resident:

Oh, okay. I'll just go and get something.

Alan:

Okay. Thank you.

Narration:

The sun was setting. Taylor and I walked around the village taking some B-roll in the beautiful orange light. Taylor took off her glasses and asked me to take her photo for Instagram. She would have to wait to post it, of course. There was no cell service. But I was a bit uncomfortable, anyway. I had come here for the disconnection and here we were collecting fodder for the very network I was trying to escape.

Narration:

The next morning we set out to record interviews. Our first stop was a village just down the road. A local dance group would be performing in the coming days. In the Banaban tradition, song and dance are the primary means of recording history.

Group:

(singing)

Narration:

Thousands of years ago, the ancestors of the Banabans crossed the vast ocean in double-hulled canoes with only the stars and the currents to guide them. These master seafarers found their way to tiny specks of land in the middle of the sea. For thousands of years, Banabans lived on this tiny Island.

Narration:

Banaba was first noticed by the British in 1804. The captain of a British vessel named it Ocean Island and the British would know Banaba as Ocean Island thereafter. For about 100 years, the British scarcely noticed Banaba until Albert Fuller Ellis arrived.

Narration:

Ellis was an Australian prospector. He worked for a company in New Zealand that developed mining operations on Pacific islands. He came across a rock sample, taken from Nauru, the island right next door to Banaba. The rock was pure phosphate. Phosphate is a mineral used in fertilizer and its strategic importance even today is hard to overstate. The Banaban dance recounts the exploitative deal that Ellis struck with the locals in exchange for phosphate mining rights.

Group:

(singing)

Narration:

According to the dancers, Ellis offered the Banabans a choice. They could accept a one pound note in exchange for mining rights or 24 pennies. Not understanding money, the people of Banaba chose 24 pennies.

Narration:

Ellis purchased the mining rights from the Banabans for 50 British pounds a year for a term of 999 years. For decades, the mining royalties were a bone of contention between the Banabans and Ellis. Banaba was seized by the Japanese military during World War II and many of the Banabans were forcibly relocated. After the war, the British government told the Banabans that they couldn't return to their home. Rabi Island was purchased from Fiji to be the new home of the Banabans.

Group:

(singing)

Narration:

The Banaban dance was a beautiful tradition. But as I talk to people, it became clear that the Banaban dancers were no longer performing regularly. They used to travel all over the Pacific performing at dance competitions, but I was told that they would only agree to perform now if I paid them. If the documentary was going to happen, I would have to be the catalyst.

Narration:

Journalists are not supposed to cause events to happen. This was a special case, but I wasn't sure how to feel about it.

Narration:

Taylor and I spent four days on Rabi. As we worked, Taylor told me about her Peace Corps service. She was putting the finishing touches on a project that she had been developing most of her service. She had organized and secured funding for the installation of 15 flush toilets in her village. It was an astounding project for a Peace Corps volunteer, the kind of massive infrastructure project the volunteers did in the '60s, but that no one really seemed to attempt anymore.

Taylor:

I just really hoped that all the women really use it a lot because I did read that implementing flush toilets closer to homes will decrease sexual assault because women don't have to leave their homes in the

middle of the night and go to a secluded area. Before the toilets, a lot of women would tell me like, "We just held it in all night." I hope that women will see it as something good and they can go in there in the middle of the night and not be scared.

Narration:

Taylor lived in the village of Vunikura. It was composed of some 30 houses arranged in a rough ring surrounding a central covered meeting place. As Taylor and I returned from Rabi, the people of Vunikura were preparing for an all-village party to celebrate the completion of the toilets.

Narration:

It was a huge celebration. The whole village, just over 100 people, attended as well as some local government officials and a small delegation from the local Peace Corps office. Everyone sat in the covered meeting area at the center of the village. A local dance troupe performed for the crowd. Everyone ate cake and drank kava.

Narration:

Taylor thanked the village for the preparation and presented the finishing touch, a public sign proclaiming that the project was completed, thanks to funding provided by USAID and Peace Corps. The sign was exquisite. It was hand painted by someone in the village. Taylor was nothing short of ecstatic over the quality of the painting. She asked me to take numerous pictures of her with her family members in front of the sign.

Narration:

The party wrapped up about 5:00 PM. The Peace Corps and the local government officials departed. It was a perfect day and the photos were a perfect addition to Taylor's Instagram account, which contained only the most beautiful and glamorous aspects of her service in Fiji. Whenever she took a photo of herself, she made sure to remove her worn and crooked glasses. She flashed a perfect smile.

Narration:

Since the very beginning of Peace Corps, volunteers have talked up their success while glossing over their failures. But in observing Taylor, I was struck by this new dimension that social media must play in Peace Corps service and Instagram has made it easier than ever. Volunteers don't even have to go to the trouble of writing a blog post. They can now post images instantly, highlighting the fun, the adventure, the noble sacrifice of life as a volunteer.

Narration:

To me, Taylor seems like a Peace Corps Instagram celebrity. Hundreds of people routinely liked her posts and left messages of admiration. But this aura of perfection didn't extend to her real life in the village. Back in her house after the party, Taylor said that she sometimes felt as though she was a failure, that she hadn't really accomplished much.

Taylor:

I'm not going to miss feeling guilty all the time. I feel guilty about anything I do. I feel guilty when I sit in my house because I'm not outside in the village. I feel guilty when I'm talking with my parents from

overseas because I'm not here in the village. I felt guilty because I didn't think that I was doing enough work.

Taylor:

What else? I feel guilty all the time. I feel guilty when I go to town because I feel like some other people can't afford it and I have that luxury. I feel guilty because I get to leave a culture that I don't like 100% of the time, but maybe they do. Maybe I need to realize that this is their life and they love it and so I shouldn't feel guilty about that.

Narration:

I told her that I had seen Peace Corps projects all over the world and I had never seen a project as big and successful as hers. Years ago, I had struggled to find 500 bucks for a World Map project. Taylor raised \$7,000 for her toilets and she managed the project for over a year. It was even more impressive considering that she was only 24 years old, but Taylor still thought she should have done better.

Narration:

"This was my best day in Peace Corps," she said, "but sometimes your best day can also be your worst day." And it proved to be true. The sun set, the village grew dark, but the party continued. Taylor and I went over to her host family's house for dinner. Her mother made us fish curry mixed in with Top Ramen. It seemed like the best meal I had ever tasted.

Narration:

As we ate, a group of some 20 people were sitting in a circle in front of the house drinking kava. Kava is a kind of sedative and muscle relaxant. It's not like alcohol. It doesn't cause inebriation per-se. But there were people near Taylor's village who brewed a kind of local moonshine.

Narration:

As Taylor and I finished dinner, a few young men returned from a visit to a local home brewer. They were completely smashed. One of them stumbled into the house and started asking Taylor to come outside and dance. She declined. He kept asking over and over. Taylor kept saying that he was annoying and she asked him to leave her alone. Taylor's host mother pretended she didn't notice. Taylor would later tell me that that's how Fijians dealt with embarrassment. They just pretended nothing happened.

Narration:

I introduced myself to the young man and ask them to talk with me outside. He followed me out to the kava circle. I hoped that Taylor would take the opportunity to retreat back to her house, but she came outside and sat in the middle of a cluster of women.

Narration:

The drunk young man asked me the same question over and over and over. I stayed and drank kava for about 20 minutes. More drunk men were arriving all the time. I made an excuse and went back to Taylor's house. Taylor joined me there a few minutes later.

Narration:

I brushed my teeth and used Taylor's bathroom. For the benefit of appearances, I was sleeping in another house. Just as I was preparing to leave, one of the drunk men from the kava circle knocked on Taylor's door and asked to come in. Taylor told him to go away. After pushing on the locked door for a few minutes, he finally gave up. Taylor told me that many of the young men propositioned her when they were drunk.

Taylor:

Now maybe they think I owe them something, but I don't know. That kind of scares me because sometimes I'm scared of the boys here.

Narration:

The next morning, I walked to Taylor's house, but she wasn't there. I looked through one of the open windows. The mattress on the bed was gone. I waited on the stoop.

Narration:

Before long, Taylor walked out of a neighbor's house with her mattress. She told me that after I left, the drunk guy came back a few times. She said it had been happening more and more often lately, so often that she regularly slept with a kitchen knife under her pillow. Around 1:00 AM, something struck the exterior wall of her house. Taylor said she had screamed and her neighbor rushed right over and told her to stay at his house for the night.

Narration:

In the light of day, we saw a coconut laying outside the house. The small house was made of bamboo and the coconut was still in its husk, so it must have shaken the whole house when it hit the thin walls.

Narration:

Taylor called the local Peace Corps office and told them about the incident. They told her to leave the village for a few days. She was to go to town while they assessed the situation. Taylor packed up a very large bag, larger than she would need for a few days away, but she said that she wasn't sure she would be coming back. She only had a couple of months left in service and she thought Peace Corps might decide to send her home early. She was divided about it. She said that she felt unsafe in her village lately, but she didn't want to leave yet.

Narration:

We walked over to Taylor's host family. I thanked them for hosting me. They were some of the kindest people I had ever met. I felt bad that things have become so crazy while I was visiting. Taylor said goodbye for what she thought might be the last time. We walked about a mile down the road and hired a taxi to take us to Savusavu. Taylor went onto the local Peace Corps office in Labasa. I left Fiji several days later and continued my journey across the Pacific.

Narration:

Months later, Taylor called me. She said the Peace Corps did decide to send her back to her village, but things didn't get much better. A few weeks before her close of service date, someone burned that beautiful sign commemorating the completion of her toilet project. Then just two days before she left

the village for good, Taylor went to another volunteer's house where she spent the night. The next day, two Fijian police officers found her there and took her back to Vunikura. She found her small bamboo house smoking and charred black.

Narration:

People of Vunikura told her that someone had put a kind of improvised fire bomb through her window and set the bed on fire. The fire quickly consumed half the house. By the time people noticed the fire and put it out, half the house and almost all of Taylor's possessions were burned.

Narration:

Taylor walked into the smoking ruin and found a metal tin on the floor that had survived the fire. Inside was her passport. She left Vunikura for good that very day.

Narration:

I tried to edit Taylor's story for over two years, but I never seemed able to finish it. I couldn't figure out what this crazy complex story meant. What was the takeaway? I finally decided that some stories can't be summed up with a tidy bow. The world is becoming more connected all the time and more complicated. The connection might make some things easier, but maybe it also distracts us from really committing to things.

Narration:

Taylor's service in Peace Corps was every bit as tough as any volunteer who served in the 1960's and she was more successful than most. But no matter what she did, she didn't feel like she was living up to the standard of that perfect volunteer in the Instagram account.

Narration:

As for me, the trip was a bust. Before my trip, I had imagined that Fiji would be idyllic. But it turned out to be one of the most difficult locations I had ever visited. Everything was hard, transportation, lodging, even finding enough food. There are undoubtedly some amazing stories in Fiji. But for me, the story of Rabi Island never seemed to come into focus.

Narration:

I had new respect for all those volunteers who struggle to get anything done in these marginal scraps of land in the Pacific, especially since everyone else thinks they're living in paradise.

(music)

Alex:

Okay. So one story I remember you telling me is when you first finished calling your mom at the end of service, and it was the first time you talked to her in two years, or you tried to reach her, right?

Janet:

I tried to but I couldn't get through. I was at this place that had a big bank of phones, and I tried to make a collect call, and I don't think it went anywhere.

Alex:

I know. It just still so mind boggling to me that you went two years without ever talking to your family over the phone or anything like that. What was that like?

Janet:

Well, even when I was in college, I only talked to my mother on the phone once a week. Long distance was expensive back then. It's just a matter of expectations. Everybody did that, so I didn't think about it.

Alex:

Yeah, because you and I are very close, and when I was in college, and I was in the process, I would call you every day when I was walking to class, and we would catch up. And I'd be telling you about how my application was going, and I would think to myself, "Oh, it's going to be so hard when I'm in Peace Corps and I can't talk to you every day." And then I ended up being able to talk to you every day.

Janet:

Yeah. But I mean, the world is different then, or was different then than it is now.

Narration:

When we sign up for Peace Corps, most volunteers have an image of what it will look like before we go. We buy solar-powered camping gear, bug spray, and rugged sandals, packing as if we're embarking on a two-year camping trip. We imagine we'll have no access to technology, an image that is ironically enough, informed by the pictures we see online, over social media and Peace Corps recruiting content. My image was informed in part by this digital content, and in part from stories my mother told me of her time in the Congo in the early 80s.

Narration:

I grew up surrounded by souvenirs from and stories of her time in what was then Zaire and is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During Peace Corps week, she would visit my elementary school classes with photos of the Congo from 1979 to 1981. She showed us pictures of her swimming in lakes, going on safaris, attending harvest festivals, and climbing palm trees. These stories were polished and sugarcoated.

Narration:

As I grew older, I got to hear the more unfiltered tales of her Peace Corps service. Like one time, my mother enjoyed mangoes from a tree in her backyard. It was only the next day, which happened to be her first teaching at a new school, that she learned she was allergic. She spent the day teaching the class with a puffy red face. Another time a green Mamba, one of the world's most venomous snakes, fell off her roof while she was reading on her porch, and slithered away.

Narration:

It was these mishaps and adventures, ironically, that made me want to serve in Peace Corps. I always admired my mother's worldliness and grit. So shortly after college graduation, with few more glamorous career options available, I left for my own service in Morocco. Six months later, I was in Marrakesh for in-service training, and I took advantage of the hotel WiFi to enjoy more uninterrupted contact with my

mother, than I could ever get in site. As we caught up over low quality video chat, it occurred to her that I should read the letters she sent home to her family by snail mail during her service nearly 35 years earlier. Here are my two favorites.

Janet:

May 4th, 1980. Dear Mom, this may be the hardest letter I'll ever have to write. At least I'm pretty sure I've never written one like this before. Well, I have a little story to tell you, but I'm not really sure how to tell you. I believe you've gotten the idea from some of my letters that we've been having a lot of problems at our school, and I also believe that I've mentioned that our préfet is totally responsible for these problems.

Janet:

You also know that we've more or less just returned from our spring break. A lot of kids had not returned as of last Monday, more than a week after school had started because, they hadn't the money. The kids who had returned were complaining once again about not getting enough to eat. They, the equivalent of the student council, had a meeting with the préfet and he wouldn't let them talk, but only told them that they'd eat what they were given. After the meeting, the president of the student body resigned.

Janet:

Wednesday afternoon and evening, I did a little work to prepare for Thursday, but then I went to bed. About 10:30, I woke up to what I thought was a gunshot or something. Well, I got up and looked outside to see what was happening. I saw a group of people walking and chanting over toward the préfet's house. We realized then what was going on. The students were attacking the préfet's house. They'd obviously had enough. This went on for several hours, and we weren't sure they wouldn't even get our house, although they didn't touch it.

Janet:

The next day, the legal representatives, a big crook who is related to our préfet, came with a National Education Representative. Judy, Sue, and I, were frank and told them that the incident, they called it a student manifestation, happened because the préfet was incompetent, never here, lacking respect, and just plain couldn't capably run the school. We told them that they simply had to find another préfet. They acted like they believed us, but we realized the next day that they weren't going to do a damn thing.

Janet:

When this incident happened, I was for some naive reason, certain that they would realize what the problem was, and that they could see the writing on the wall and do something. But the préfet managed to twist things around and distort them so that they are kicking the best students out of school and persecuting the people whose houses were not attacked. Please don't call Peace Corps when you get this letter.

Narration:

By snail mail, the news traveled slowly. The next letter was misdated March 21st, so we're not sure how long after the riot it took my mother to send an update, but her mother and five siblings received it on June 2nd, 1980, about a month after the riot.

Janet:

Dear mom, Elena Harvey and Diane, Karen, Cindy and Paul and Luke and Leia. I hope you are all well. It almost seemed for a while as if school might've started this very week, but then the ridiculous things started happening again at Ketubwe This Zairian security agent came to our door and said he wanted to talk to Judy and me. After breakfast, he came back and he accused me of having started, started the revolt because of that article that a student took last November, December from my house, the préfet had given the secret police a copy of the article.

Janet:

The agent was supposed to write down what I was saying, but he wrote down incriminating things that I didn't say and I made him change these things and then I wouldn't sign the paper. I was very upset after that because the man hadn't really wanted to interview Judy after all. It was just some sort of cover. I packed up and came into town. In the meantime, the secret police arrested four other teachers, one of whom is charged with talking with Americans against the Zairian government. The only evidence they have against him is that he is our friend and we talked together often and also that they have the article.

Janet:

I'm not sure what I'm going to do. Peace Corps would like us to ride out the problem. They have reassured me that if I'm arrested that they will get me out quickly. I really don't think I like their position and I'm not really sure I can write it out. Well I don't think I can say much else now. I haven't heard from you because the préfet has taken our mail and won't give it to us. Take care and I'll write again soon. Love Janet.

Narration:

So in summary, there was a riot at my mother's school. The Zairian secret police accused her of inciting said riot, interrogated her in French, which my mother had only studied in high school and Peace Corps training, and asked her to sign what amounted to a confession. My mother took this confession from the secret police agent, ripped it up and threw it in the fire. She then reached Peace Corps, who asked her to ride out the problem and assured her that they would free her quickly if she was arrested. Can you imagine receiving this news from your daughter or sister weeks after the fact?

Alex:

I think it was, it was kind of cool because you sent me the letters when I was at IST, when I was at that training six months in. I'd never read your letters before. I knew you had them and that you typed them up. I mean, so that brings me to some of the more salacious letters like that. That when you wrote her about the secret police and I just like, I want you to put yourself in your shoes now and think about me as your daughter now that you're a mother, and think about if I had said you that kind of letter and you got it three weeks later.

Janet:

She did contact Peace Corps.

Alex:

Yeah, of course she did.

Janet:

You know, I think in that whole episode that the security police were, was a much more mundane happening than the things that happened before that because of the riot at the school. The night of the riot, which I thought I had mentioned to you.

Alex:

Yeah, you did.

Janet:

Yeah, that there were students outside our house having a discussion about whether or not they should throw rocks at our windows and break it. And the three of us were hiding in a stairwell that went up to the attic because we didn't want to be hit by flying glass. So that was scary and the people coming in asking me questions and then writing down things other than what they asked me and putting down their own answers. That didn't bother me as much, right.

Alex:

Yeah, well the letter about the riot in and of itself too, like this is all kind of a singular episode, but there were a couple letters and you write the one about the riot thinking of yourself as a parent. Now if I've written you a letter that there, I had students outside my house deciding if they wanted to burn my house down, you would have freaked out.

Janet:

Yeah, certainly, but of course nowadays we have the internet and I could've called you.

Alex:

Yeah, that's true. I probably would've been on the phone with you like mom, "What do I do?"

Narration:

My dispatches home via Facebook and email were far more mundane for reference. Here were emails between my mother and I in June, 2015. Alex Matthews, Wednesday, June 10th, 2015, 9:47 p.m. to Janet. "Can I buy the help on iTunes? It's like \$18 but I can't find it on Netflix. And you would be able to download it too. I just feel like watching it since I just finished the book." Janet leads Wednesday, June 10th, 2015, 10:20 p.m., "Yes, buy it. Love you" sent from my iPhone.

Narration:

During that time, I was probably the most depressed I've ever been in my entire life. Surely after I spent my 23rd birthday vomiting on a beach in Tangier, drunk off cheap Moroccan wine and wondering how much longer I could handle living life here. But the photos on my Facebook and Instagram looked like nothing short of paradise. I dressed in traditional Moroccan garb with other volunteers lounged in front of waterfalls and rode on Camelback across endless sand dune set against a spectacular sunset backdrop. I was creating a version of my life that felt like a lie.

Narration:

While my mom's school did her family for writing too few letters. Lauren and I found the constant updates on life back home, distracting from our respective services. Social media made it more difficult

to enjoy our lives in the moment and this lack of mindfulness I realized at some point was hurting my mental health. So, I switched off Facebook and suddenly I began to cherish those long and often fruitful walks to the market that my mother and I had in common. I committed them to memory without hashtags, captions or photos. I considered how to appreciate each moment as I was living it, rather than wonder where this experience might be taking me.

Narration:

My peers might be announcing their grand plans to go to med school or get married on Facebook and other PCBs might be boasting of their latest greatest project, but I was doing fine right here. Connection matters, but life in Morocco taught me how we can act is just as important as whether or not we do. Sometimes just unplugging and being with the people right in front of you is more important than maintaining connections back home.

Alex:

Yeah, do you think that not having social media and this constant connection with back in the U.S. helped you have that time to think?

Janet:

It's so hard to say because it didn't exist, but yeah, sure. I had less distractions than, even I do in my life now. It is way too much time when people aren't bored. It's probably good to be bored and spend time thinking and looking at clouds and not having your face in a phone.

Alex:

I know, do you think, this is a loaded question, but do you think that your service with your mode of communication was harder than my service and my mode of communication?

Janet:

No, I don't think my service was harder. I mean, I think there were times when I miss things desperately, but maybe being able to see things on the internet would make you miss it more. I mean, it's hard for me to know that.

Alex:

How do you think it's like chain social media, internet has changed Peace Corps more broadly, do you think it's for the better?

Janet:

I think that's really hard for me to say, right? I mean, I'm not sure social media, I mean it's just my opinion, is necessarily reflection of what life is really like somewhere else. But people looking at social media might think they understand life in Africa because they see a couple of videos or something, but they don't know what people's lives are like there. So, it may give people a mis-impression that they understand things better than they really do.