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Stories: A book of TCK Stuff

Lauren Van Singel

Grand Valley State University, vansinla@mail.gvsu.edu

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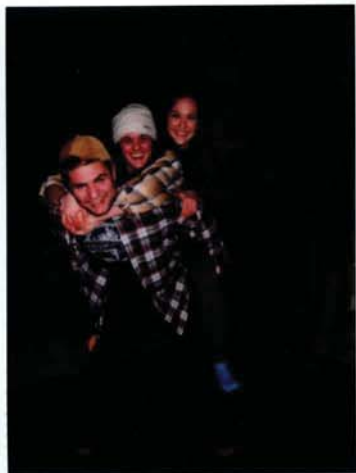
STORIES:

A Book of TCK Stuff



Made with ♥ BY LAUR

dedicated to the people
scattered around the world who've shaped me,
& who love me beautifully even from far away,
& cover me in prayer every single night,
& remind me of my worth when I've forgotten it exists.



ai ni de.



second
culture"

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E. Van Reken

add, áce, cáre, pálim; end, éven; lt, lce; odd, ôpen, ôrder; tók, pól; up, búrn; a = a in above, u in focus; yô = u in fuse; oli; pout; check; go; ring; thin; this; zh, vision. < derived from; ? origin uncertain or unknown.



A NOTE FROM LAUR:

Wikipedia defines a "third culture kid," or TCK, as "a term used to refer to children who were raised in a culture outside of their parents' culture for a significant part of their developmental years."

They are described as global nomads, and oftentimes explained as people who develop and identify with a third culture apart and distinct from both the culture they were born into ethnically and the culture of the country they currently reside in.

I was born in Holland, Michigan, and I moved to Taiwan when I was seven. I lived there for two years, came back stateside for three, went to Taiwan for another six, graduated from high school, and moved to Grand Valley a week later. I am a TCK.

I grew up in a dorm with eighteen other high schoolers, and I'd travel to Japan or Korea for sports tournaments, and I'm standing in my best friend's wedding this summer in Australia, and I've eaten tarantula and watched a monkey bite my brother and jumped off too many waterfalls to count. And that's all wild and fun and good, but life has also been filled with moving vans and tear-filled goodbyes and questions of where I belong.

I started this project in October. The air was getting crisper, the leaves were bursting into the colors of sunsets, and I hadn't been to Taiwan in a year and a half. And I think that's what made me do this — this unquenchable longing I had to go "home," even though I had no idea where that was anymore.

And as I thought about all of that, I wondered if other TCKs would tell similar stories of the juxtaposition of satisfaction and discontentment in their lives. So I decided to ask.

So in these next however-many-pages of chaos you'll find bits and pieces of my heart, along with fragments of the lives of people like me. I've come away with the understanding that I can have more than one home, that I crave stability, and that I wouldn't trade my life for anything.

I wish I had talked to more people and gathered more photos and written more poetry.

I wish I had heard more stories.

But here I am, seven months and sixteen interviews later, completely convinced that this "book of TCK stuff" is not yet complete enough to publish.

But I suppose that's life, isn't it?

We're all just waltzing along, continuously becoming.

♥, me



Ian James Huang

23, Ann Arbor, MI (Taiwanese)

Taiwan: 8 years

China: 1 year

US: 13 years

I'm really thankful for getting to experience all the different cultures that I have lived in and being able to see how different people actually are. How...some people have very different values. Like in different cultures they view different things as important. For example, here in the states we value individuality—we make our own choices. And in Taiwan, we value the family—family seems to be valued a lot more than in the US. It's shown me that there are so many different types of people in this world. And just because something is true for you doesn't mean it's true for everyone else. It helps me get a better perspective on the people around me.

I've moved over a dozen times in my life and gone to a dozen different schools, and it's really hard to develop deep friendships when you're so used to moving on and having to make new friends and leave the old ones. So I guess the hard part of college was building relationships.

Freshman year I came into college wanting to meet new people because I knew literally *one* person in this whole town. So I would sit down in the cafeteria next to random people and try to start a conversation. And one day I saw this girl from my math class and she was also sitting alone, so I got the courage to go talk to her, and I just struck up a conversation and started talking about random stuff, like how we were in the same math class or something.

And that was the first time I had talked to her, but I started talking about how I believed that there is love at first sight, and that my parents met and only dated for a short while before getting married.

So it made the conversation go really deep really fast just randomly in a cafeteria.

And I think that shows that a lot of times TCKs wanna get to a deeper level than may be comfortable for someone else, but it's just because **we've experienced so much loss**...and we want to get on that level relatively quickly in order to see if that person is worth investing our time in.

But yea.

I don't talk to that girl anymore.

So back in the states I only went to grocery stores and supermarkets where everything is clean and in rows and everything. But then I got to Taiwan and I went to one of the traditional markets where there were leaves and cusks on the ground and meat hanging up and it was all dirty, and it just shocked me so much that I just burst into tears.



Shana Louise Heading

22

Adelaide, Australia

(father: Australian,
mother: Filipino)

I was in Australia from when I was born till when I was six. Then I moved to Taiwan and we stayed there till fifth grade, came back to Australia for one year, and then went back to Taiwan till senior year. Then I was in Queensland and India doing YWAM for six months, and then I moved here and I stayed here.

I lead worship at church, and apparently every time I pray out loud I switch back to an American accent. My fiancé pointed it out to me one time and was like, **“why the hell do you do that—you don’t speak like that anymore.”** And I hadn’t even noticed I’d been doing it.

I’m so messed up inside.

What do you say when someone asks you where you’re from?

Depends. Sometimes I like to be funny. Cuz most people want to know what *Asian* country I’m from, so if I think that’s why they’re asking, I just say Adelaide. And they see what I look like and will just be like, **“yea but where are you *from*? Like where are your *parents* from?”** But yea. I guess I just say Adelaide now.

*In what ways have you felt
“different” from your
monocultural peers?*

I guess when people talk about how they're best friends with the same people since they were babies and they've always lived in the same town in the same house and then they get engaged and they're all in each others' weddings and I'm like well, everyone I know is gone.

I feel sometimes like I have this huge urge to just, *share* with people about my experiences, but sometimes I don't say anything because I don't want to come across as arrogant. Does that make sense? Like I don't want to be that person that's like, “yea I've been here and done this...” **Because a lot of people don't care—or at least don't care as much as I do, obviously—**so I'm just so scared they'll be like “okay okay enough already.”

Like I don't want to be that person that just can't let go, you know?

“I don't want to be that person that just can't let go.”





我想你



Stephen
Lafayette
Tong
湯子逾
(Tang Zi Yu)

20

Eugene, Oregon

China: 5 years
Taiwan: 8 years
Oregon: 7 years

I have definitely felt different in some ways, simply because a lot of people have never even left the state they were born in. They haven't experienced anything as incredible as a different culture. Often times it makes it harder in social situations as well, simply because any stories I have go right over their head.

Possibly the most difficult part of being a TCK is that I don't feel like I fit in with my own family in many cases. I am nothing like my dad's traditional Chinese side, and yet I'm nothing like my mother's conservative, Western side. It does help build a deeper relationship with my immediate family, but it makes it difficult to feel at home and comfortable being myself around the people I should be comfortable with.

I don't like to think of my upbringing as a crutch, rather a leg up on people who have not been as lucky as I have and seen the places, people, and things I've seen. It makes it much clearer to me how blessed I am.

On my first trip to the Philippines, for a mission trip, what stood out to me more than just about anything ever has is the joy I saw on the faces of the children we fed and played with—not just happiness, but pure joy...something that some people never truly feel.

Cori Hsin-Yu Yang 楊芯瑜

21

Hualien, Taiwan



Having lived in Taiwan my entire life up to this point, I don't think I qualify as an actual third culture kid (TCK) by strict definition. My parents are both Taiwanese, and I was raised the typical Taiwanese way, until when I was 11 and my parents transferred me to Morrison Christian Academy, an American school in Taiwan. That was when I started my "TCK journey." Immersed in an environment completely different from the one I was used to, I was forced to adapt in order to fit in. It wasn't like a "survival of the fittest" scenario of Darwin's, but I certainly had to make some major changes to my life. English wasn't my first language, but it was the only language that would enable me to keep up with school work and bond with my peers and teachers. I used to wear uniform to school...not at Morrison. I had to enrich my wardrobe. And so began my transformation from a monocultural Taiwanese teenager to an in-between American educated but Taiwanese raised hybrid. I ended up spending three and a half years at Morrison before transferring back to Taiwanese high school. Even though it accounted for a merely 1/7 of the my life, my identity and perspective were both drastically changed because of it.

When I first transferred back to Taiwanese high school, people wondered if I was an American Born Chinese (ABC). They thought I had an American accent when I spoke Chinese, and I had my ears pierced (it's not common for Taiwanese girls to have their ears pierced at a younger age.) Even to this day, when I walk on the street, random strangers ask me if I live in America, probably because of the way I dress. For example, I have no intension of covering up my entire arms and legs to shade them from the sun, as most Taiwanese girls do. I wear shorts when the sun is out and the weather is scorching hot. I love being tanned! Even though I use Chinese predominantly now, as I attend a Taiwanese medical school, I never really lost the English part of me. A lot of times I find it hard to completely describe my feelings in just one language, and my diary is the best proof to this dilemma. I switch between English and Chinese in my diary. Sometimes, I spurt out incoherent Chinese phrases because they were freshly translated from English a few seconds ago.

I used to have a more severe identity crisis, as I find it hard to feel completely belonged in one particular culture. My automatic response when asked is "I am from Taiwan", but it's not a true representation of me. I don't think I will ever be able to shift back to being completely Taiwanese, but I am never going to be that American either. People on the other side of the Pacific Ocean are different from who I am, as I am a stranger to most of the deeply engrained American cultures that I never got to experience during my years at Morrison. And it is hard to share this feeling with others, as people who haven't had this kind of experience will never truly understand what it feels like to be "stuck in the middle." Frustration and confusion were common sensations I had, especially when I was going through the process of deciding where to go for college.

Thankfully, as I got older, I have matured and learned to accept and be proud of my identity, and essentially my life story, as it is. I am more tolerant to different cultures and more willing to share and learn from other cultures, and it is helpful being bilingual as well. I appreciate the unique mix of American and Taiwanese in me, different not only from monocultural people but also any other TCK. As the world grows smaller with advancing technology, it never hurts to bring more diversity and enrich the lives of one another.

four,

Oh Laur, how are you supposed to start a goodbye letter to a best friend of 5, 6 years? what are you supposed to say to such a friend... such a sister? No words are enough to describe how much you mean to me. My thoughts are just everywhere so bear with me if they are random. I cannot imagine my life without you. You have already been etched into my everyday's plans & my thoughts. There will be so many times when I'll wish you were with me to share special moments with. Who am I supposed to tell my stories to? Who am I supposed to go to if I see a hot guy? whose shoulder will I cry on? who will I go to when I need moral support? who will fix my braids for me? who will bring purple to my pop can tops? who else would give me massages & ask for more in return? - even if it's because I suck at giving them...

My comfort in this separation - though little it may be - is all the memories I have with me to hold forever. I will never forget our near death experience on Isaac's roof with Isaac, Grant & Boaz. I have never seen the guys so worried about our safety. It was my mom. Sounds terrible but your family was always understanding and welcoming. I felt at home at your house. I will never forget the times we munched off the food in your house. Nor will I forget our break-in at the baseball stadium. Then having Hector tell us that he saw a picture of us posted up on the walls. It was such a scary moment but I loved it. I'll never forget our laser tagging in Taipei & blindfolding you with a piggy eye mask to the ferries wheel. Then our conversations on how we're gonna die up there & which photo adventure buddy in the years to come? And don't say Megan Duncan because you don't know that. She could be a freak for all we know. I'll never forget your love for socks & your hoarding tendencies. I'll never forget our supposed "first & last"

Please always know that I love you more than anything else in the world.

steep over back in 8th grade. Or was it seventh grade... we watched "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days" & so we gorged ourselves with it. I will never forget our ice skating experience and how terrible I was but you did not laugh me and helped me instead. I may not have a boyfriend to hold my hand anymore but I know that I will always have you for that. I will never forget the first time I watched you jump rope. My favorite is still the butt one. I was so amazed at your talent. And you never cease to amaze me with your talents, smarts, athletic ability! compassion, and more. Especially your Chinese speaking and listening. <3 Practice your Chinese with me on our Skype dates 'caz it'll be a bummer if you forget it all. I will never forget the time Cateb high-fived my face instead of your hand. I will never forget our tanning sessions up on the roof and the roof when it wasn't closed off. I will never forget our senior trip and our hike up to the waterfall and finally getting there with Shan, Boaz, Ian, Rouny and others. I'll never forget our watching of sunsets on big trip and setting off fireworks in Taipei at that park while watching that couple making out. I will never forget stepping on poop in Taipei and you coming to help me out by stepping on it too. Then having that inconsiderate lady yell at us to tell us that we are "selfish" and never think about anybody but ourselves! Our memories together are countless. And you know what? There's more to come. I believe it.

Laur, I am going to miss you so much it hurts. You have been with me through the hardest times of my life. You have been the greatest listener anybody could ask for. You are always a good friend even when I'm not. You are the first person (besides Ms. Heaton) I told about my parents' situation and rightfully so. I just had the sense that I could trust you. It was surely God telling me that it was okay to open up to you. God placed you into my life & I am ever so grateful for that.

Aidan Lee Van Singel

20

Allendale,
Michigan

Taiwan: 10 years
Michigan: 10 years

Languages
Spoken(ish):
German & English
& Chinese



Have you ever felt different than your monocultural peers in any way?

Yes.

But you have to explain.

I don't know. **I don't understand half the stuff they do.** Like language-wise I feel different because I don't know slang and stuff. But I also feel different because everyone I know is ten times further away than anyone they know.

I miss Taiwan all the time.

The place that we lived at—I don't know whether to consider it rural or urban—it's not a city, but it's this social dynamic that you don't really see in America at all. I don't really know how to explain it, but I miss that a lot.

When I came to America, I wouldn't cross the road unless I was with someone because in Taiwan, you jaywalk all the time, and here they have pedestrian lights and everything. I guess I just didn't know how it all worked.

It's weird hearing people talk about high school...like prom and pep rallies—I don't really understand what all of those things consist of just because **our experiences were so different**. That might not be a TCK thing though—it's just that our school was a conservative private Christian school. We had like 500 people K-12, and so many people *here* have 500 kids just in their *graduating* class. It's hard when I'm with people here because they'll pass by kids from high school and not even wave, but if *I* saw someone from *my* high school, even if we didn't hang out back home, I would take the time to catch up.

I guess **I kind of always felt like I didn't belong anywhere**. But it worked the other way as well—like once I started taking German and being immersed in *that* culture—at least in the classroom setting—I felt myself being drawn to it. So this summer I'm headed to Germany.

chasing rooftops

January 6, 2015

I climb my stairs in methodical repetition, slowly ascending the endless spiral above. Twelve steps separate each platform; I skip every other one and thus finish each segment in six. Three steps more and I'm beginning all over again. It gets trickier once the second floor turns into the third. Each staircase now has only eleven steps, but it still takes two staircases to reach the next floor. There are twenty in total, from basement to roof, but I typically start on the ground level: one hundred steps. Then I turn left, pushing myself out the green metal door and into the open sunlight.

It doesn't end there, though. Walls surround the roof for safety, walls far too high for any enjoyment of the Taichung skyline or for any thoughts to truly escape my mind. And so I climb the stone awning of the door across from me, jumping from the ground and hoisting myself up with experienced agility. From there, I climb once more, scaling bricks with hands and feet all too familiar with process. And now I'm standing. This is the place that I personally consider the roof: the real one is just twenty feet below. Walls line this plaza as well, but these ones are only two feet tall and are more of benches anyways. Sometimes, looking directly down from atop a ten-story building is scary, terrifying even. I typically opt to dangle my feet off the side that instead drops onto the roof below.

Our building is colorless and dull, really, but the view from it is incredible. To the right, I see townhouses, which in Taiwan are always at least four stories tall and narrower than any house that you've ever seen. They line the streets in rapid succession and seem perfect for a movie rooftop chase. In the distance, the arches of the baseball stadium peak over rows of houses. A highway fills my view ahead, as well as the part of our village that's been torn down and under construction for years now. To the left and also behind me, towers scrape the sky and buildings like mine are below average, too short to make the cut. Some are beautiful and others are just standard, but they all mean something to me: I belong to all of them. And when the sun finally sets, the lights come on and the sky is flooded with city lights, illuminating every single building in blinding radiance.

I used to come here all the time, breathing in the wind, soaking in the sun. This was where I would write my stories, building whole worlds and characters that existed only on sheets of paper. This was where I would study for tests, or at least take a nap with my textbooks by my side. This is where I watched the sky turn orange and red and purple a countless number of times,

where I tried to locate the few stars that peaked through that murky cloud called pollution. (I've seen sunsets in the Philippines and star splattered skies in Swaziland far more outstanding than the ones I view from my rooftop perch, but they still pale in comparison to my memories of the relatively less extraordinary that I witnessed atop my home). This is where I would talk to God, ask him questions and tell him about my day. I yelled at Him sometimes, as well. I asked him why my cousin was dead and I questioned His plan for my life, why he was making me leave this country. This is where I told you that I loved you: not to your face, of course. I told it to the wind and let the humidity quickly douse my secret with sweat, obscuring it from everyone else. I took my friends here: the select few that I knew would fully appreciate it in all its glory. This is where we would share our dreams and passions, talk about what made us tick, and grow closer with every simultaneous exhalation.

I live in America now. The tallest roof in my vicinity is four stories high and still inaccessible to the public. I still write stories and study for tests, but it's different. I watch sunsets and look up at the stars, but it will never be the same. I talk to God and He's still the same, but nothing else in the world seems to be, because how can I show my new friends the wonder of a simple rooftop ten stories up that you can call home? So I carry on chasing rooftops, to no avail so far. One day, though, I will find another, and it will be perfectly majestic.

April 12, 2015

We roam the city of Grand Rapids on a sixty-degree day that pushes the cold winter out of our memories. Elevators take us up to parking garages that provide vantage points for a clean view of the skyline. I peer out at worn brick walls and gaze below at people milling about and shops lining curved roads. Between panoramas of our surroundings and shots of Adam in his always on point attire on our latest iPhoneography photoshoot, I stop long enough to really be there, in the moment. I realize that I may have just found myself another. They clearly appreciate it more than me: they never spent five years turning the roof of their house into a personal haven or an escape from the world below. Regardless, I let my eyes wander from their post at Lot I, and they return to me a sigh of satisfaction. And the garage I stand on now is still no replacement for the beauty and the memories that belong to the roof I left in Taiwan, but I now have a starting point: for new memories and for a new place that I can some day completely call home, too.

--Marion



Annie Lee

21

Malibu, California

(Taiwanese/
Chinese/
Cantonese/
American)

Taiwan: 12 years

California: 8 years

Italy: 1 year

There was this one moment where I was in Rome at the Spanish steps, and there was this group of people gathered

around this performance or show, and we went to check it out. And they were doing the Everything skit, and that's something that I always associated with Taiwan and the Philippines and *my* background. But my American peers knew it too just from their Christian backgrounds. It was cool because **I kind of got to see all of my cultures and experiences mingling together all at once.**



In what way(s) have you felt “different” than your monocultural peers?

I feel like **I can’t fully relate with them**. I just have partial knowledge of their culture. I think when I came to college especially, because I seem very American, so I relate like 80%, but there’s this whole other 20% that I don’t know about—like TV shows or how we were brought up...I don’t know as much as they do, and **there’s a disconnect**.

I think because I lack kind of a full understanding of one culture, it allows me to appreciate multiple cultures more. Especially going to school in a predominantly white, more upper-class area...**it gives me a wider circle of understanding of others** in comparison to my peers.

But I still do kind of wish I could relate to them better.

“I sometimes feel a need to connect to my peers in only a monocultural mindset... like I find myself not talking about my other cultures when I’m around them just because I want to relate.

And it’s also too much to have to explain my background, so I find myself not wanting to or not having the time to do that pretty often.”

I miss being in an environment where every single person I was around understood what a TCK was. Like I go to school now and no one really knows what that term means. I miss feeling like I can fully connect with my peers in terms of culture...cuz it’s just something that you can’t really understand if you haven’t experienced it.

I just miss being around TCKs.



Legend says that a thousand cranes

will make my wish come true

So I'll fold and fold and fold and fold

till I'm brought straight back to you.



Han Na Kim

金翰娜

김한나

20

Danville, Illinois

Birthplace: South Korea

Passport: South Korea

Taiwan: 18 years

Illinois: 2 years



It was really challenging for me to figure out who I am. **I was very confused with my identity** because I knew I'm Korean, but I didn't feel, think, or act that way at all. I felt like an American because I was (to an extent) exposed to the American way of life for a majority of my life and spoke English better than any other language, but I knew that I was still very different from an American who has lived all his/her life in the States. Another challenge of being a TCK was constantly having to say goodbye to people and not knowing when would be the next time I'll see them again, or if I'll ever see them again.

I feel like **I'm not as "deep-rooted"** in a specific location as some of my monocultural friends, because even though I've lived in Taiwan most of my life, I still moved around a lot. Also, I attended private Korean school in Taiwan until 3rd grade, then switched to a Christian American international school until I graduated high school, so I lived in a combination of Taiwan/Korean/US cultural environment. A lot of my monocultural friends grew up in a small town their whole lives and have never lived outside of that town or state. Also, I don't want to sound arrogant, but I feel **like I have a more open-minded view of the world and of different cultures**. It is easier for me to think in other people's shoes as a result of that.

Amidst all the challenges, I'm still very thankful for the ability to learn three (Korean, Mandarin, English) languages at a very early age. Also, I'm grateful for the opportunity to travel and live in so many different places, because not everyone is given this opportunity. This has allowed me to learn about multiple cultures which gave me an advantage in socializing and building relationships with people from different parts of the world. I'm thankful for my **invaluable relationships with friends all over the world**—I also won't have to worry about not having a place to stay when I travel. Lastly, I'm grateful for all the different amazing foods I've had and love.

One of my favorite memories is of traveling to Thailand for our volleyball tournament my senior year. We got to meet people from Japan, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Guam, many of whom I became friends with later on. It was a very special trip because we all got to participate in community service. I got to see first hand what slums are really like while I picked up the never-ending piles of trash along the streets of the slum villages. We also played games with the local children and ate lots of delicious Thai food. The trip came to a close with our team winning the championship. This trip made me appreciate the life I used to take for granted. I will also treasure my friendships from that trip forever.

WHO

AM

I



Meghan Elizabeth Augsburger

21

Allendale, Michigan

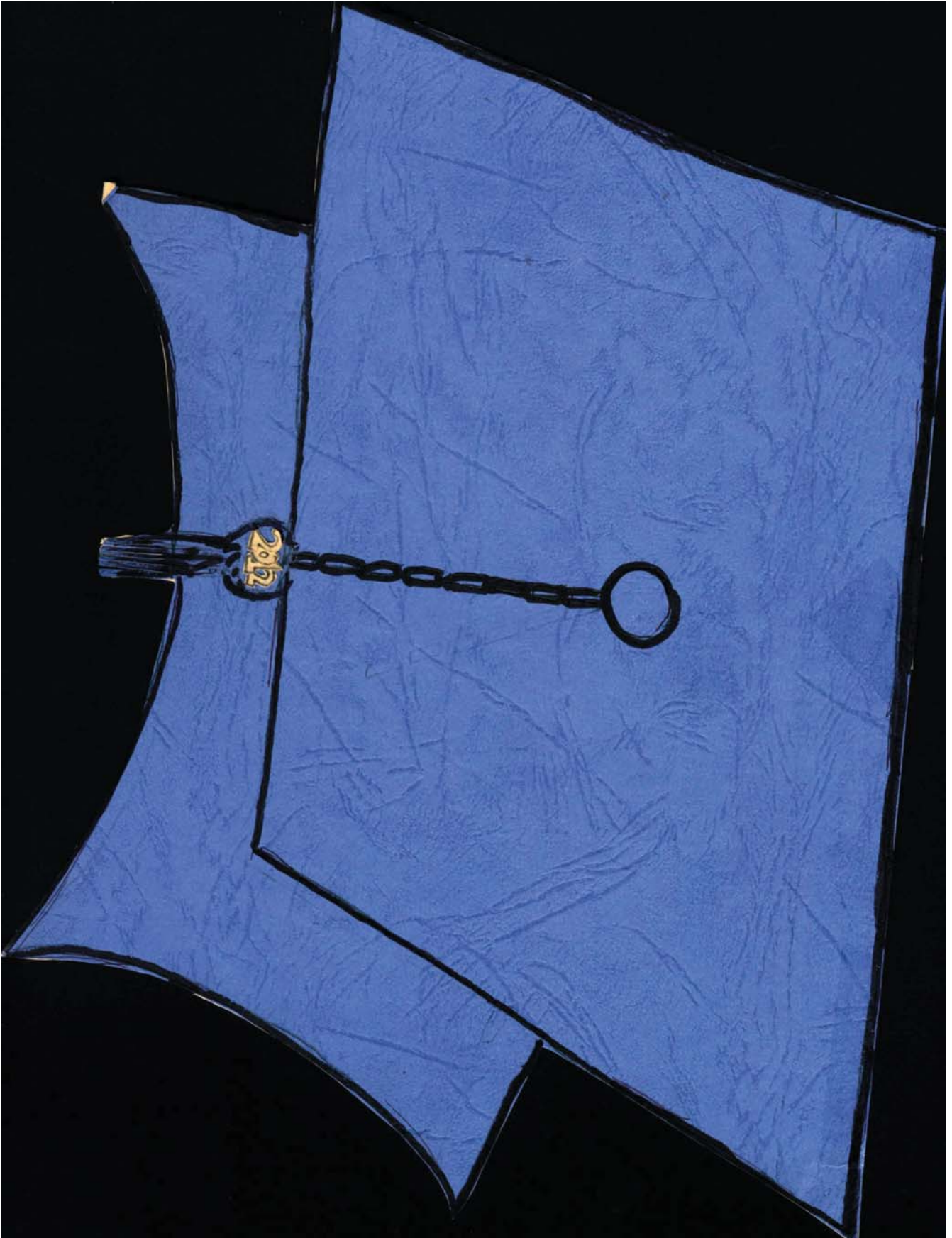
I'm a Caucasian female and I have two passports, once from the United States and one from the Netherlands; my father is an American from Oshkosh, Wisconsin and my mother is from the Netherlands. I speak both Dutch and English, as well as German. Because my dad was an officer in the Air Force, **we moved every three years.** I spent more than half of my life in Europe, between Germany and the Netherlands. My family and I have lived in Germany twice, once for three years and now for eight years. We were in the Netherlands for two and a half years. I was actually born in Denver, Colorado, but we moved when I was a few months old. I've lived in Kansas, Arkansas, and Colorado briefly. Michigan is only the fourth state I've ever lived in.

I dread the question "where are you from?" I usually begin by saying that my dad was in the military and that we moved a lot; then if I have to get into more detail, I say that I lived the longest in Germany, which I do consider home in many ways. All of my friends have moved away but I have other contacts there, including my boyfriend. If I really have time to get detailed, I say that I was born in Denver, Colorado, but that we moved soon after I was born.

It's a very complicated question.

I feel different from most people in all of the environments I've lived in. My mother is Dutch, so when we visit family or when we lived in the Netherlands, I felt that I somewhat fit in because of my language skills and the familiarity of certain customs and foods; however, I also felt foreign, because I'm very American at the same time. I speak English at home and in school and have "American" values in some ways. When I'm in the U.S. though, I feel like **I fit in, but at the same time, people don't understand the world or culture I grew up in.** I've always been around military people and I finished high school on a military base in Germany. Almost no one I meet can relate to that. In college, I felt lonely sometimes because I missed certain cultural things in the U.S. and had a completely different view of the world. Most people I know have never left the country, while I have family in a different country and have visited many different places. Sometimes when I tell family or friends in the U.S. about my life abroad, they think that I'm bragging. That's not my intention; my life is just different from the average American and when I talk about my life, it comes out wrong to some people. Some people don't understand that I don't want to live in either of my parents' cultures (Dutch or American)... I actually prefer Germany because that's where I spent most of my teenage/adult life.

Being a third culture kid has been challenging because it hasn't always been easy to integrate back into American or Dutch culture. Like I said, people don't really understand me, and my stories come off as bragging. I don't like to say too much about my experiences to prevent people from thinking that I'm spoiled. On the other hand, I would never trade my life for any other. I love the way I grew up; it has given me so many advantages in college, job searches, etc. I've been so incredibly lucky to have the chance to experience a variety of cultures, places, and foods. I have friends all over the country and world because of all of the places I lived. Moving was hard and making new friends was never fun, but **when I look back, I wouldn't want any other life.** Military life and living in a third culture has prepared me for so many challenges in life. I'm less afraid than many of my monoculture friends.



Lauren,

Well here we are. Funny how it takes but a few seconds to exchange

Salutations, but takes courage and acceptance to bid adieu. You're my closest friend, don't know how I would have turned out senior year if not for you. You comforted John Gay

me when I needed someone to be with, you rejoiced with me when I needed someone to

Share the moment with. I honestly can't think of a more perfect friend then the

friend you've been to me. Lauren, "Promise me you'll never forget me because if I thought you would I'd never leave."

You never cease to amaze and love and commitment to God and those around you. I get excited just imagining the

Plans you and have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

~Carol Sobieski

I have with your family has made my time here at Momson a phenomenal experience. Lauren, I'm going to miss you. The way you and your

This isn't goodbye though, I'll be seeing you and we'll continue making memories together. For now, go and the life God has given you. Take life to the fullest, the way you've taught me to live. Don't be afraid to do new things, explore and find out what life has to offer, the way you and I have done. Most importantly, don't lose sight of God and the love he has for you, the way you've shared me everywhere to miss you, but we'll keep

in touch. making my

"We only part to meet again."

You comforted John Gay

I don't know if you and unique you are.

~A.A. Milne

impress me with your

"A goodbye isn't painful unless you're never going to say hello again."

~Unknown

of you. You live an amazing life, a part of it. The way you and your

The love and friendship that

"Don't be dismayed at good byes. A farewell is necessary before you can meet again. And meeting again, after moments or life time, is certain for those who are friends."

~Richard

Bach

shared me everywhere

to miss you, but we'll keep

Thanks for

life an extra-

ordinary life

to live.



Jacob Marion Van Singel

20

Allendale, MI

Michigan: 10 years

Taiwan: 10 years

“I tell them that the place that made me who I am is Taiwan.”

“Well, home is not places, it is love.”

Just kidding.

But really.

I love how beautiful Taiwan is. It's called Formosa because it means beautiful. Hiking in the mountains and going to rivers and jumping off waterfalls and stuff. Seeing more than tourists do because it was my home and not a destination. I love how easy transportation was there. I could take a taxi or a bus anywhere I wanted and was able to be more independent from my parents than most kids in America. And the food—was, still is, one of my fondest memories. Just the diversity and authenticity of the Taiwanese cuisine that we had.

I look back a lot of times at how there was so much less security there. Just the fact that abandoned buildings weren't monitored and there was easy access to apartment roofs, and a lot of my fondest memories were of just exploring—going out with you and Aidan on adventures...fishing for fish in the benjos and only catching poop. Climbing all the roofs, just because looking out once you're out there is just beautiful in the day or the night. It's just so much bigger than most of the cities here.

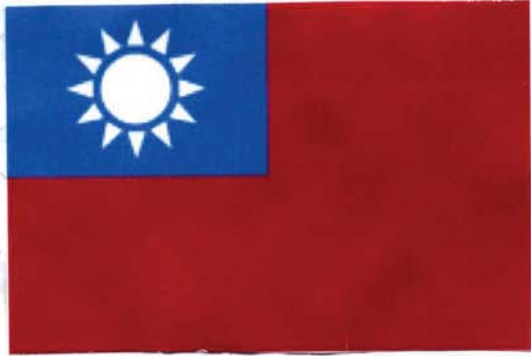
I feel like at some points, once people find out that I didn't grow up in America, they start to covet the life that I've lived, when at the same time, I see myself coveting some aspects of the life they've lived. They wish they could've traveled as much as I did, jumped off waterfalls in Taiwan, been able to take taxis to night markets whenever they wanted to, but they don't realize that I've never experienced Friday night lights, or homecoming week...I don't know. I think another big difference is that we're so much more used to saying goodbye and leaving people behind. The TCK community is like, constantly ebbing and flowing as parents uproot their kids and bring them to a new mission field or business pulls them away to another country, and so while many of my monocultural peers grew up in the same town, I was constantly watching my friends leave.

I think most kids in college, TCKs or not, are kind of in a weird phase of figuring out where they belong and where their home is, just because we're all in this new stage. But that being said, I would still credit Taiwan as my "hometown" and the place where I most developed. But I don't think I would consider it my home anymore. Because hometowns and home is different. You'll always have a hometown, but as life moves on, you move on as well, and I think you can belong to more than one place. So yea, Taiwan will always be a piece of me, but I don't think it's home anymore.

I think moving to college was probably one of the hardest things, because that was a moment where it wasn't just a couple classmates and friends who were leaving—we were *all* leaving and spreading out to different parts of the world. So instead of just leaving our hometown to move onto college, we were leaving everything. A monocultural friend of mine tried empathizing once and explained that everyone goes through that when they move to college. He said that no one from his high school was at GV, and that he rarely sees his classmates anymore either. But I still think it's different. They still have school breaks and weekends where they can drive back home and all of their friends reconvene at the same place. We can't do that. Our "place" is \$2,000 and 24 hours away. We can't go back to that same spot, and even if we could, Taiwan is like, my hometown, but I don't technically belong there either.

Looking back now, one of the coolest but simultaneously hardest things about growing up as a TCK is the fact that I have friends literally everywhere. Despite having to learn to say hello and goodbye to friends really quickly, I also learned that I was blessed with the fact that my friends are now all over the world, each leading unique and individual lives. Obviously that makes reunions hard, and I'm not able to see the people that made me who I am today often, but each of their stories has a way of inspiring me and showing me just how much there is out there.





sometimes
I feel like
you're slowly



becoming
less and



less of



a

?

home.

The Forest and the Trees

I'm out hammocking again, and I can never decide what is more beautiful: the entire forest at the birth of fall, or the one tree in its midst, splashing with color; that one tree, or the specific leaf on its bottom branch that's just a little bit brighter than the others. John Dewey said that "there would be no seeing the trees because of the forest." And although that can be true—that you can lose sight of the individual in the midst of the group—I feel like that takes credit away from each part's contribution to the beauty of the whole.

I had twenty-one people living in my house in high school, and even though we each as individuals had unique stories to share and personalities to work with, it was even more amazing to witness us all living life together. Because how beautiful is it that we represent over seven different countries? That we cook and clean together each day after school? That we pray for one another every evening? That we made it through all of those years of absolute chaos without killing each other?

We all left that house at different times, and the rooms we once slept in now belong to others. Most of us are in college now, with our parents and siblings countries away, and we've created new homes apart from each other. But not a day goes by that I don't think of that life.

And each and every one of those kids is a miracle in my book, but I sometimes wish we were all together again. Because just as that one leaf belongs on that one branch on that one tree in that huge forest, I belong in that one room of that one dorm in that one school in the whole of Taiwan. So yes, we might lose sight of the trees in looking at the forest, but we mustn't fail to realize—at least on some level—that the forest would be nothing if all of those trees got up and left.

Tory (tôr'ē, tō'rē) *n.* *pl.* **Tories** 1 A historical English political party, opposed to the Whigs, now called the Conservative party. 2 One who adhered to the British cause at the time of the American Revolution. 3 A very conservative person; also **tory**. — **Tor-yism** *n.*

to (tō, tə) *prep.* 1 To throw, pitch, or fling about: tossed in a small boat on the open sea. 2 To throw or cast upward or toward another: to toss a ball. 3 To throw, esp. casually or indifferently: to toss clothes on a chair. 4 To remove from abruptly or violently: with out: He was tossed out of a job. 5 To throw (a coin) in the air to decide a question by comparing the side facing up upon landing, with a previous call. 6 To lift with a quick motion, as the head. 7 To interject or interject casually or carelessly: to toss in impressive but irrelevant statistics. 8 To utter, write, or do easily or in an offhand manner: with off. 9 To bandy about, as something discussed. 10 To turn over and mix the contents of: to toss a salad. 11 To make restless; agitate. 12 To drink at one draft: often with off. — *u.i.* 13 To be moved or thrown about, as a ship in a storm. 14 To roll about restlessly or from side to side, as in sleep. 15 To go quickly or angrily, as with a toss of the head. 16 To toss a coin. — *n.* 1 The act of tossing, as a throw or pitch. 2 A quick movement, as of the head. 3 The state of being tossed. 4 **to** — *u.i.* (def. 1) [Prob. <Scand.] — **to** — *u.i.* *n.* — *u.i.* 2 flip, flick, hurl. 12 quaff, swallow, gulp.

to — *u.i.* *n.* 1 The tossing of a coin to decide a question. 2 An even chance.

to (tō) *n.* A little child; toddler. [Prob. <Scand.]

to (tō) *n.* **totted**, **toting** *Informal* *u.i.* 1 To add: total: with up. — *u.i.* 2 To add. [Short for **TOTAL**.]

to (tō) *n.* 1 The whole sum or amount. — *adj.* 1 Constituting or comprising a whole. 2 Complete: a total loss. — *u.i.* **toted** or **talled**, **taling** or **talling** *u.i.* 1 To ascertain the total of. 2 To come to or reach as a total: amount to. 3 Slang To wreck completely; demolish, esp. a car. — *u.i.* 4 To amount: often with to. [<L. **totus** all] — **to** — *u.i.* *adj.*

to — *u.i.* *adj.* 1 Designating or characteristic of a government controlled exclusively by one party or faction that suppresses political dissent by force or intimidation and whose power to control the economic, social, and intellectual life of the individual is virtually unlimited. 2 Tyrannical; despotic. — *n.* An adherent of totalitarian government. — **to** — *u.i.* *adj.*

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affect the emotions of, esp. so as to feel compassion or gratitude; move: She was touched by their concern for her health. 11 To hurt the feelings of. 12 To relate to; concern; affect: The war touches us all. 13 To have to do with, use, or partake of: He never touched anything stronger than ginger ale. 14 To affect insignificantly; taint: vegetables touched by frost. 15 Slang To borrow money from. — *u.i.* 16 To touch someone or something. 17 To come into or be in contact. — **touch** *u.i.* To stop briefly at (a port or place) in the course of a journey or voyage. — **touch down** To land after flight. — **touch off** 1 To cause to explode; detonate; fire. 2 To provoke or initiate, esp. a violent reaction. — **touch on** (or **upon**) 1 To relate to; concern: That touches on another question. 2 To treat or discuss briefly or in passing. — **touch up** To add finishing touches or corrections to, as a work of art or writing. — *n.* 1 The act or fact of touching; a coming into contact, as a tap. 2 The sense stimulated by touching; the tactile sense by which a surface or its characteristics, as of pressure or texture, may be perceived. 3 A sensation conveyed by touching: a silky touch. 4 Communication or contact: Let's keep in touch. 5 A distinctive manner or style, as of an artist, author, or craftsman: a master's touch. 6 Delicate sensitivity, appreciation, or understanding: a fine touch for collecting rare china. 7 Any slight or delicate detail that helps to finish or perfect something, as a work of art or writing: to apply the finishing touches. 8 A trace; hint: a touch of irony. 9 A slight attack; twinge: a touch of rheumatism. 10 A small quantity; dash: a touch of perfume. 11 The resistance to motion offered by the keys of a piano, typewriter, etc. 12 The manner in which something is struck or touched, as the keys of a piano. 13 Slang Borrowed money, or a request to borrow money. 14 Slang A person from whom money may be borrowed, esp. easily: a soft touch. [<OF. **tuchier**] — **touch** — *u.i.* *adj.* — **touch** — *u.i.* *n.*

touch and go An uncertain, risky, or precarious state of things. — **touch** — *u.i.* *adj.*

touch-back (tuch'bak) *n.* In football, the act of touching the ball to the ground behind the player's own goal line when the ball was propelled over the goal line by an opponent.

touch-down (tuch'dəwn) *n.* 1 A scoring play in football in which a player has possession of the ball on or over the opponent's goal line. 2 The act of touching down, as an aircraft or spacecraft.

touché (tuch'ē) *interj.* A term used in fencing to indicate a touch scored by one's opponent, and otherwise to acknowledge the wit or effectiveness of a point made in argument or conversation. [F.]

touched (tuch't) *adj.* 1 Affected emotionally; moved. 2 Slightly unbalanced in mind; crack-brained.

touching (tuch'ing) *adj.* Appealing to the emotions; esp., inspiring tenderness or sympathy. — *prep.* With regard to concerning. — **touch** — *u.i.* *adj.* — **touch** — *u.i.* *n.*

touch-me-not (tuch'mē-nōt) *n.* Any of various plants the ripe seed capsules of which explode when touched.

touch-stone (tuch'stōn) *n.* 1 A dark stone formerly used to test the purity of gold by the color of the streak made on the stone by the metal. 2 Any criterion or standard by which quality or value may be tested.

touch-wood (tuch'wūd) *n.* **rick** (def. 1).

touchy (tuch'y) *adj.* **touchiest**, **touchiest** 1 Apt to take offense on very little provocation. 2 Liable to cause hurt feelings or contention: a touchy subject. — **touch** — *u.i.* *adj.* — **touch** — *u.i.* *n.* — *u.i.* *adj.*

tough (tuf) *adj.* 1 Capable of bearing tension or strain without breaking, esp. because strong in texture or composition. 2 Difficult to cut or chew. 3 Strong in body or mind, esp. in resisting or enduring stress. 4 Requiring determined or intense effort; difficult: a tough assignment. 5 Resolute; unyielding; inflexible: a tough stand in the negotiations. 6 Severe; harsh: a tough punishment. 7 Given to or characterized by violence or rowdiness: a tough neighborhood. 8 Informal Unfortunate; regrettable. 9 Slang Great; fine. — *n.* A ruffian; rowdy. — *u.i.* *adj.*

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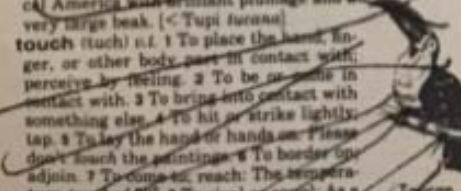
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Toucan



Olivia Dwight

23

Los Angeles, California

“I’m white (1/4 Filipino).”

Passport: United States

Taiwan: 15 ½ years

America: 8 years

How do you respond when someone asks you, “Where are you from?”

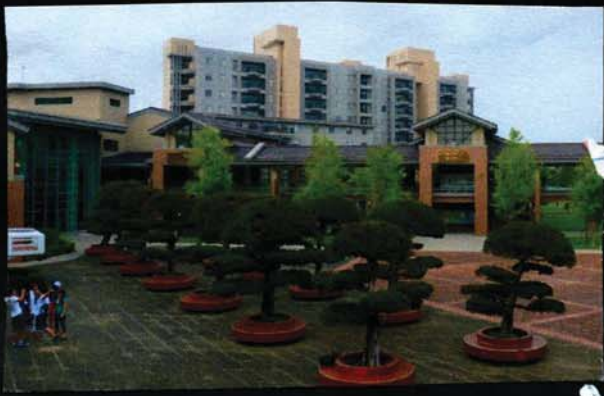
When I lived in Chicago I generally did a quick judgment of their personality/ appearance/ general demeanor and decided whether or not I thought they knew where Taiwan was. Interestingly, since I’ve moved to LA I will always answer that question with ‘Taiwan’. Part of that is there are so many Taiwanese and Chinese people in the Los Angeles area that I assume everyone in LA has at least heard of Taiwan. I think it comes down to the fact that I’m not as afraid of an awkward encounter because the audience is different.

The best thing about growing up learning mandarin, but being very obviously white, is walking into a Chinese grocery store in the US and speaking in Mandarin. Not only are the cashiers shocked and surprised, but the smile that spreads across their faces once they realize what just happened is priceless!

To pretend that my outlook on the world is the same as the typical American child would be doing my experience a disservice. It’s hard to identify which characteristics of mine can be attributed to being a TCK or which are simply just my personality. I guess in some ways it’s probably both. Things I feel different in are social interaction, openness about my personal life, and interest in different cultures other than my own. **I also find myself gravitating towards friends who also find themselves living in a culture that isn’t home.** For example, I’ve become friends with a lot Asian from Hawaii who are living in Los Angeles. Even though they are grew up in America, their parents immigrated to the US and the lifestyle of LA is very different than the Hawaiian lifestyle, so they find themselves in a very different culture as well.

I think **the hardest thing for a TCK is transition.** In some ways transition is easier because you’ve lived your whole life in transition, and at some point you know you’ll be transitioning back into what most would consider your ‘Native’ culture. This makes it exponentially harder because you try very much to hold onto the culture that feels comfortable, but the reality is that you can’t find it wherever you end up.

It becomes a challenge to find the happy medium between both.



ONION cake

32-story Rooftop with
Mango Pits and uni-
corn beers

Elliot

aneelnaynay

MORRISONIANS

~~nineteen~~ sibs & counting

shana louise

Rocky

they told me that my heart began its work

only 4 weeks after my conception

that it beat 100,000 times a day

that it pumped 1.5 gallons of blood each minute

but they didn't tell me that my heart would break

when I left a place

and that a piece would stay behind

they didn't tell me that each friend that moved

would keep a shard of my heart in their pocket

and carry it with them when they went

that didn't tell me that my heart would bleed out

onto every name and state and sidewalk

but let me tell you

that although my heart is shattered

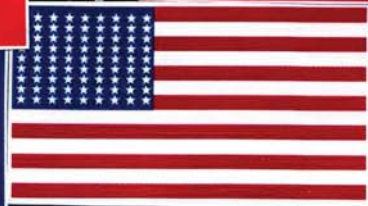
and scattered

it still beats

just in a million different places



Owen



Pieces

I am from multiple places-

The city I was born in
And where we moved to two months later.
The house I left when I was seven
To go to Taiwan.
The dorm I came to at uni
And all the apartments in between.

I am from the many countries that my friends have left me for-

Finland
Korea
Australia
Italy
the Philippines.

And now my heart is scattered because each one holds a piece.

I am from typhoon days and snow days and sick days and school

From chocolate milk and 百香錄 and dozens of pitchers of koolaid.
From corn fields and rice patties and rows of mango trees
From hammocks and tents and wooden beds named Chuck
From fried oreos and baggy sweaters and hours of DIY

I am from dad's construction business and homemade arcade machine

From ma's obsessive cleaning and yellow notepad lists
From Jacob's little letters and angry upright palms
From Aidan's "Call me Bing" and little earth ball

I am from the lands represented by the flags upon my wall-

Where I traveled by plane
And train
And bus
And foot

Where I won the Champinoship volleyball game
Where my little brother took a banana from a monkey
And got bit and made momma cry.

Where I swallowed a tarantula
Where I skinny-dipped under the stars with my two best friends
Where I fell in love with teaching.

Where I laughed
Where I cried
Where I grew.

Because these places have shaped me

Defined me
Made me.

I am from here.

And there.

And no where.

And everywhere.

All.

At.

Once.

Lauren Van Singel

I am sitting here... staring at this blank piece of paper... not wanting to start writing because I know that when I do, that painful lump thing in my throat will only grow bigger.

What do you say to a person you love beyond words, trust in like no other, know incomparably, believe in more than yourself, and enjoy more than immensely. How do you say how much you care... how do you say goodbye... I've pondered, I've thought... all I can come with is that words, simple words can't portray feelings as I feel them. there are no words or phrases that can explain our crazy watermelon flavored BFFAEAE bond between us. though words do not do us justice, I have to try.

COME VISIT ME IN AUSTRALIA.

I AM GOING TO MISS YOU MORE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE. YOU WILL ALWAYS MEAN THE EARTH TO ME. THANKS FOR BEING A PART OF MY LIFE. YOU ARE AWESOME. ♥

LOVE
happy-
mess

"home is wherever I'm with you."

it makes me want to cry, scream, fall asleep and never wake up when I think of the fact that we are parting ways. You are my bestie. You will never be replaced and I am more than glad to hear that I won't be either. Life will not be the same without you by my side. Without your daily hugs. Without you asking me to massage your sore shoulder. Without me showing you my new bug bites. Without your super loud laughs. Without your pure confidence. Without your white girl wannabe swag :p Without... you. We can't let time differences or the miles between us destroy or damage our friendship.

I am going to skype, write, message, and miss you muchos. I love you so much. You are not just my friend or bestie but more like a sister.



Yuliya Vladimirovna Mironova

“21 years, 37 days
and 22 hours” old
(at the time of this interview)

Grand Rapids, MI

passport: Uzbekistan
parents: Russian
moved to U.S. at 2 ½



I've felt so thankful for the sacrifices my parents have made in leaving their families and culture behind to give a better life to me and my siblings. It's hard for them to have friends here because of cultural differences, and I can sense that sort of longing for companionship.

I would say a lot of my coworkers make fun of me sometimes. Because they don't know much about my culture, they latch on to certain things—like they assume I'm communist or part of the Russian mafia, or make remarks about how I probably drink vodka all the time, and I sometimes feel singled out.

Honestly it's hard to communicate with my parents—I try to meet them halfway and speak in Russian, but I don't practice it enough and I struggle to come up with even the simplest grammar, so a lot of times I'll just speak Ruglish—like Russian-English is what I call it. But we can't really communicate fully in either language. So that sets me apart from my peers. I've always envied my friends' relationships with their parents where they were super close, because a lot of things are more difficult with my family...like conversations with FAFSA and about dating...it's made life in general a bit more difficult.

For birthdays, there's this special Russian birthday dance you do. And I just remember sitting with everyone in my house in Grand Rapids eating traditional food and learning this Russian dance...I really treasure that because I feel like as you get older, it's harder to get your whole extended family together.

Мария
Чавдарова
Чакърова
(Maria
Tchavdarova
Tchakarov)

19

Monroe, Michigan

passport: Bulgaria
- lived in Michigan
her whole life



I get to experience this whole other world that is kind of my own and kind of isn't. For my family, personally, being a TCK meant a lot of travel. I have been to about 17 different countries in 19 years of life and on over 100 plane rides. I never had to wonder what was out there; my parents saw the American culture and liked it but wanted me to know it wasn't like this everywhere. They did a beautiful job of opening my eyes to what poverty looks like and what privilege looks like.

My dad grew up in an impoverished home where he had to walk barefoot throughout the summers, wear clothing that was usually torn, and work on farm fields gathering harvest to make very minimal change. He also part-time walked donkeys from one place to another for their owners. Why, you ask? No clue. Bulgaria was a communist country back then and life was hard—he wanted out. Someone told him about America one day and from then on out it was his goal. He moved to the "big city" (Sofia) when he was sixteen with \$20.00 and a few fresh garments he had sewn together. He was teased for being poor and not up to fashion trends, but that did not hinder him from excelling. He ended up being top of his class and getting two masters degrees in college: one in engineering, and one in business. For his internship, he spent a year in Egypt developing his mechanical and engineering skills while building planes. After making all the right connections, a few failed relationships, and now two kids and a wife, he finally moved everyone out to the USA.

And I don't know, I guess the comfort level my life is a testament of his success. At least that's what he says. I am thankful to have a tangible example of what hard work looks like in a way that's very different from other people.

When I went back to Bulgaria for the summers, I got to experience growing up like my parents did. Every time I would go back for the summer, I stayed in the village/town my dad grew up in. I remember I would bring back tons of clothes from America for my friends and they would just absolutely rejoice because they didn't have anything like that there. Bulgaria didn't have cartoons at the time so I would spend all of my time (like my dad) barefoot, walking through rich soil, picking up fresh strawberries, kiwis, and blackberries and using my shirt as a basket as I ate them.

Life was really raw and organic and full.

I remember I would always come back to the US and be so taken aback by how there was just nothing to do here. I was saddened by the fact that strawberry Poptarts did not begin to compare to fresh, real berries, and how a constellation nightlight shines upon my ceiling measured up not at all to the real constellations in the sky of a village that was not populated with light-bulbs and electric wires.

Have you ever felt “different” from your monocultural peers in any way?

Yes, in every way. From an extremely young age **I noticed I was pretty different**. It ranged from the food I was familiar and unfamiliar eating, to my family's religion (Eastern Orthodox), to not knowing what the Easter bunny was, to becoming a little more intellectually independent than all of my friends because mom and dad didn't know how to help me with my homework (no matter how hard they tried), to just simple mannerisms my parents carried that an American parent didn't.

Being a TCK challenged me a lot more as a child. **I really just wanted to fit in** and eat dinosaur shaped chicken nuggets and have a dad who threw around a football and have a summer where I stayed put instead of traveling. Every time I left for 3 months, I'd have to make friends all over again. it was exhausting and discouraging. However, now that I'm significantly older, things are different. I value being bilingual and having an appetite for culture.

I don't think I would have wanted it any other way.



Jill Elizabeth Van Singel

43

Brighton, Michigan

Born in Michigan, lived in Taiwan from kindergarten through twelfth grade (with 6 months in London and two years of furlough in Michigan), Michigan for eleven years, Taiwan for two years, Michigan for three years, Taiwan for ten years, Michigan for two years until present.



I was around people from so many backgrounds. Like racial and ethnic, but also religious and socioeconomic. I think **it helps you relate better to people in general.**

I think the frequent departure of people is a huge challenge, and I guess it's almost like it makes me more guarded. Like I don't connect—like it's this ironic thing, because I feel like I need to connect *quicker* with people—like I have to get to know them deeper faster because one of us might leave. And I think that's partly to do with the fact that I'm a TCK—I feel like I don't have very many friends anymore, because either they're all gone or like, if people don't get me, then it's not worth trying. You get so used to meeting people, building a relationship, and then leaving or having them leave.

There's this inner feeling of “they just don't get me.”

In high school, for our basketball trips, we'd go to Hong Kong and stay with families. And it just felt so...it just felt so adventurous. It felt like this huge adventure. You'd stay with another teammate in the house, but it helped me be more independent more quickly than a lot of other people. We got to explore and hang out with kids from all different schools, and travel within Hong Kong and Kowloon shopping and just exploring on our own. So it was exciting, and we felt really grown up and independent.

Where are you from?
“It's like I don't really
have an answer
to that question.”

too many.

there is something beautifully devastating about belonging to too many places
leaving your heart in too many corners of the world

the photographs that line my wall
the currencies that line my pocket
the stamps that line my passport
remind me of a country i once belonged to
and places where pieces of me were left behind

i've loved too many people from too many places
i've said goodbye too many times for someone this young

and just when i feel i can't divide X my heart into any more fragments
i'm torn from "home"
and forced once more to begin again

and yet i know for certain that i've lived and i've loved
the places i've traveled have filled my lungs
the people i've loved have guided my steps
and the pain is proof of it all

there is something beautifully devastating about belonging to too many places.

-- marion

in closing,

thank you. to everyone who I interviewed, and everyone who helped me, and everyone who told me that this was even a slightly good idea.

I hope that you've enjoyed reading these stories as much as I've enjoyed compiling them.

So a shoutout to TCKs everywhere: you are beautiful, and you are loved, and you have so much to offer this world, and so much more world to explore.

So keep it up. Ya'll are my heroes.

