

We Are Not That Different

By Greg Stock

We are not that different. I whispered those words to a five-year old boy in a village in Malawi, East Africa. I said those simple words to the young malnourished boy named Allam because I had finally seen the human connection with my own eyes. It had become tangible to me. His tiny little hand holding onto mine had finally shown me something I had been yearning to realize. I had been longing to feel this oneness. It was the last day of a two-week service trip that I went on over winter break. I went to learn, serve and love. We did and we were loved back. But, the question that still continues to arise in my mind is; did we do them justice?

I think we all desire not to judge each other on race or culture, but it seems as if it is human nature. Yet, when his hand was lying in my hand, something never before had happened. I did not see the color of his hand. I only saw his hand and my hand joined in one. This is to me is what being one world means. It is a deep and complex understanding that looks past all color, sex, nationality or circumstance. I always said I understood this oneness, but it was this experience with Allam half way across the world in a small village in southern Malawi that finally showed me my own humanness. This experience is profound in its simplicity.

I saw solutions to Allam and his villages' extreme poverty and hunger. With sixty percent of his country still owned by the United Kingdom royal family, with Prince Charles tea plantations overrunning the farmer's corns fields, which leaves only forty percent of their land to be farmed. This is just a selfish abuse of capitalism. We are probably drinking the tea that is farmed in Malawi, but we don't even know if it is from there because it is packaged in England. None of the money from those plantations goes towards the Malawi economy because they do not own the land. These are the consequences of colonization and globalization.

This is an extreme example of how choices made by individual people can affect millions of people. We try to make these issues complicated so the less educated feel isolated or feel as if they cannot do their part in this game of life. Yet, each person plays a crucial part in this world community. Everyone has a place in this mission to restore peace and equality if we so choose. From Allam in the village of Bakasala to myself in Saint Louis, Missouri, we both have a choice to be a part of the global community. The choices we make as individuals affect each person outside of ourselves. Whether you can afford to go serve half way across the world, which is an incredible gift in itself. You do have the power to serve on your own campus today. Justice can be done in your relationships, your friendships, your dorm or your family. I know Malawi, Africa seems exotic, but I hope you don't need a trip half way across the world to recognize the opportunity to do justice in your own community. Because what I saw there was completely ordinary, it was my own humanness. We really are not that different.