

Tufts University  
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Let's Travel Kenya: Empowerment through Travel Project  
Nairobi, Kenya  
July – August 2019

### **Background/ Personal Experience**

During the run-up to the 2017 Kenyan elections, the hashtag #TribelessyouthKE would trend every week. Kenyan politics have always been characterized by tribal and ethnic divisions. Political atmosphere and language is largely led by getting the support of “major tribes.” Tribal division dates back to colonial rule when the British would pit tribe against tribe and utilize the principle of divide and govern. It was not until the 2007 Kenyan elections when the tribalism would erupt. The post-election crisis left 1000+ people dead and over 600,000 as Internally displaced persons (IDPs). Even before 2007 however, tribal region wars have been fought, commissions have been created to combat tribalism and leaders have unsuccessfully promised to deal with this ill. Apart from the colonial and political history of tribalism, the geographic demographics of Kenya are largely based on tribal lines. Outside of the large urbanized cities like Kenya's capital Nairobi, people are born, grow up, and exist primarily with members of their own tribes. From a young age, many Kenyans are taught to think of “me and my tribe” – an attitude which leads to corruption and continued economic underdevelopment. Leaders and employers select people to fill state institutions and private companies based on tribe rather than skills and experiences.

### **Project Rationale and Overview**

In order to ensure a society is peaceful, members of that society have to recognize and appreciate the shared attributes they have as humans. A society's prosperity and peace relies on its ability to celebrate its diversity irrespective of the differences that may exist in terms of race, language, gender, sex, ethnicities – or in this case, tribes. Travel enables one to not only learn, but also experience another culture and recognize the world that is beyond them. My hope for this project is defined by the following Maya Angelou quote, “Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.” Inspired by the organization begirl.world and Girls Love Travel, I hope to encourage some young Kenyans to think beyond their communities, dream bigger than their villages and create possibilities and ambitions outside their counties and regions.

### **Project**

Let's Travel Kenya will be a structured ten-day summer camp that will take place in August 2019 during the school vacation holidays. The project will utilize activities themed around cross-cultural learning and travel as a means of exposing participants to different cultures and ethnicities, and building a strong diverse community committed to peace. Let's Travel Kenya will focus on students from rural high schools, who lack resources to expose students to communities and people beyond their own.

During the first three days, students will gather daily and have activities including making intercultural/international culinary meals, guest speakers, and introductory language lessons. We will have model United Nations and mock Kenyan parliament proceedings so participants can learn about another county, and represent their policies and interests in the mock proceedings. Additionally, evening assignments and discussions during the camp will include learning about different cities and other currencies. We will also include an activity aimed towards interviewing and writing about another participants' culture and/or travel experience.

The second part of the camp will be focused on field trips and physical travel activities. The first part of the week will be in Nairobi where we will visit the Nairobi National Museum, and Kenya National Archives. These three centers have preserved the country's history and offer rich resources to learn about the people, arts and cultures of Kenya. There will also be a trip to Bomas of Kenya where participants can get insight into the cultures of some of Kenya's tribes and interact with experts versed in the history of the tribes. We will also

incorporate a movie screening and discussions. During the last 3 days, we will travel to Kisumu, Kenya so that participants can experience another Kenyan city and also learn more about its specific culture.

I aim to have a total of 30 participants, with an even representation across Kenya's regions. I will select schools based on remoteness from urban areas and ask the schools to nominate one of their students for the project. Schools in rural Kenya commonly consist of low-income students who are most affected by the lack of resources and exposure.

To support the program, I have already recruited 3 Kenyan volunteers: Valary, Teresa and John share my vision. The volunteers will help with project logistics and run different activities during the camp. Valary is a junior at Pomona College majoring in History, Teresa is a policy analyst intern at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analytics and is passionate about food, and John is a visual art student at Kenyatta University who focuses on "creating art that changes the way our Kenyan cultures and environments perceive art and society". We all grew up in Kenya, and we speak 7 languages including Kenya's official languages English and Swahili. The project will take place on the facilities of my former high school Alliance Girls High School with room and board provided for students and volunteers. Alliance Girls has pledged their full support in terms of advice, equipment, and connections with the vast array of alumni network all over the world.

### **Timeline**

During the camp, we will follow this tentative timetable:

Day 1: Participants arrive and check in to Alliance Girls

Day 2: Officially launch the camp, introduce ourselves to students and discuss the goals of the camp, importance of diversity. Students present about their own and others' cultures and travel experiences.

Day 3: Basic 101 French and German language lessons by Alliance Girls. Cooking in the afternoon and movie screening and discussion in the evening.

Day 4: Model UN/Mock Kenyan parliament in the morning and later field trip to Bomas of Kenya.

Day 5: Day trip to Nairobi National Museum and National Archives. Debrief in the evening on how the centers reflect Kenya's diversity.

Day 6: Travel to Kisumu, arrive and check in

Day 7: Visit Kisumu Museum and discussion with locals on traditions.

Day 8: Debrief on the ten days. Students discuss what they have learnt and how they will be ambassadors.

Day 9: Travel back to Nairobi, overnight at Alliance Girls

Day 10: Departure day

### **Expected Outcomes**

1. To instill a sense of independence, courage, inquisitiveness and positive adventure in the participants
2. To expose participants to different cultures and people from different tribes, and encourage friendship and partnership beyond tribes and language
3. To build a diverse community founded on respect and strong friendships, and spark a drive within members of this community to follow educational and career goals that transcend their comfort zone

### **Continuity**

To ensure project sustainability, I intend to create a "Let's Travel Kenya" blog and group on social media and continually update these with relevant resources and information. I hope that participants will use the blog to continue expanding on their learning, and serve as ambassadors within their home communities, further increasing the reach of the program.

### **About me**

I am a junior at Tufts University majoring in Economics and International Relations with a potential career in international trade and/or agricultural policy. I was born and raised in a rural community in Western Kenya and first travelled outside my country in high school when I was a Cultural Exchange student in the US. I have previously co-designed a project on female empowerment in Kenya. I am currently studying abroad at SOAS, University of London. My goals and dreams have no limits – and I attribute that to exposure and travel.