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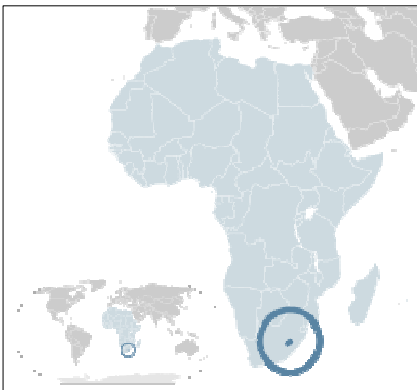
# The View From Up Here

*A Blog Post by Brenda Kay Hafer*



*The mountains are calling, and I must go!* — John Muir

Most of us don't immediately think "mountains" when we think of Africa, and I'm guessing you don't think "snow" either. But here in Lesotho, the self-proclaimed "Mountain Kingdom," mountains and snow are commonplace. As westerners, we often clump together all of Africa, thinking the images that the *Lion King* conjures up are of what the entire continent is constituted. While the *Lion King* may be a starting-off point for some parts of Africa, where I find myself is unlike Pride Rock and my preconceived notions of Africa. We (humans) are often guilty of accepting a single story or interaction as universal, applying it to a greater community or people group, assuming *all* of Africa is a huge safari or *all* Americans are rich white people.



I live in Lesotho, a small country in Africa—southern Africa (not South Africa) to be exact. The stories, experiences, and perspective I will share are from my interactions with the Basotho people. This is not reminiscent of all of Africa—this is Lesotho.

About six months ago, I moved from my training village in the lowlands to my home and site for the next two years in the beautiful district of Thaba Tseka. Thaba Tseka is one of ten districts in the country and is one of the mountainous districts. I am currently living at about 2,300 meters above sea level (7,500 feet)—we are high up! At this level and this time of year, it is COLD!!! Hoa Bata!

I live in a relatively large village just outside the main town of Thaba Tseka. It has been one of the highlights of my service to live with a host family: my Mme (host mother), Matsolo; my grandfather, Ntate Mohole (who is a whopping 98!); and the cutest little abuti (brother), Kemiso. I live in my own rondaval, the traditional Basotho house on their compound. (Tour to come!)

While there are plenty of animals, there aren't any lions or zebras to be found in these parts—just a multitude of sheep, cows, horses, donkeys, chickens, and a few pigs. Sorry to disappoint. My primary job is as a teacher at the local primary school. I work alongside Basotho teachers teaching English and Life Skills. My school serves my village and the surrounding villages



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and has a roll of about 350 students in Grades K-7. During the last two quarters, I taught in Grades 5-7. Currently, we are on a well-deserved winter break.

Like my neighbors and community members, I live without the modern conveniences of electricity, running water, and reliable phone/internet coverage. This is all easier than I had once thought. I fetch water from the pump, wash my clothes in the stream, and charge devices using solar panels—and I use A LOT of candles! This is how the majority of this country—and thousands of other people around the globe—lives.

What I am learning and hope to teach those I meet is that Africa is a continent—not a people, not a catchall. Africa houses many countries—countries with their own culture and traditions. Lesotho is just one of them. Likewise, Americans are not all white; they don't all think, believe, or act in the same manner. We pride ourselves on our individuality, and Lesotho is proud of their unique identity. It's important that we recognize that humans, in any context, cannot be described in one single story, and my time here in Lesotho will be a glimpse for you into the lives of the Basotho people, not all of Africa.

Friends, it's beautiful up here in the Mountain Kingdom, breathtaking even. But it's not how we thought, it's not how all of Africa is, and I haven't seen Mufasa yet. Remember, the next time you're interacting with someone you think you know based on party affiliation, race, status, or gender . . . a single story is not true for Africa, America, or even all democrats or republicans, and especially not for that individual standing in front of you. Let them tell you *their* story. You might be surprised—they might not be exactly who you thought, and it just might be breathtaking.

Salang Hantle,

Brenda



*Proudest accomplishment so far: carrying a 20-liter bucket of water on my head!*



*Moving Day!*

