

ATTERIDGEVILLE

TIMES

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POLE POLE

Walk, don't run.
Be still, don't rush.
Listen, don't speak.

These are lessons that seem counter to what I have learned (explicitly or implicitly) growing up in the United States. I have lived most of my 22 years in a country and culture that values time as a metaphor for money, that tells me that on time is late and early is on time. As with most everything in life, there are positives and negatives to this mindset. Certainly, things can be counted on to move (somewhat) efficiently in the States (except for the Maryland MVA), and you can generally expect meetings to happen when they were scheduled.

Photo: Walking through the fabric market in Arusha.

HOW DO YOU SAY IT IN ATTERIDGEVILLE TANZANIA?

Asante - Thank you

Sana - Very

Asante Sana - Thank you very
much

Karibu- You're welcome (In
response to thank you, or to say
you are welcome to this place)

MUSIC

Hurts 2B Human by P!nk ft. Khalid

Still Rolling Stones by Lauren
Daigle

Unpack Your Heart by Phillip
Phillips

BOOKS

Just Finished

Learning to Walk in the Dark by
Barbara Taylor Brown

Half of a Yellow Sun by
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The Immortalists by Chloe Benjamin
Future Home of the Living God by
Louise Erdrich

Currently Reading

Harry Potter and the Half Blood
Prince by J.K. Rowling

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi
Adichie

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

Up Next

Living Together by Dietrich
Bonhoeffer

Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of
the Cross

BUT (and it's a big one), I have missed out on a lot in life by living for deadlines. It's a lot like teaching for the test, which is the (all too common) method of teaching students by overloading the curriculum with preparation for standardized tests, and as a result forgoing a holistic education. By focusing only on the end goal, be it turning in a paper for a class, passing classes to graduate, getting on the right flights and buses and trains, I have missed some of the joy of the journey. Yes, you could argue it is necessary to focus on the end goal, and sometimes it is, but not at the cost of rushing past all the meaningful moments along the way. I've started to ask myself; what



Some elephants resting in Tarangire National Park.

*“Be still and know that I am
God.”*

Psalm 46:10

do you see when you
walk, instead of run?
What happens when you
are still, not moving?
What do you hear when
you listen instead of
speaking?

The answers are still
hard to process, to write,

or verbalize. It feels like the work of a lifetime, because I constantly have to bring myself to those questions. It is a constant meditation, to realize I am running again when I might be missing out on a walk with a friend. I might be moving around and ignoring the beauty of the stillness in the park or the peace of a house full of sleeping inhabitants. I might be speaking so loud and fast that I cannot hear the voice of God speaking through the people around me.

This year was never about finding myself, or growing closer to God, or going on some meaningful and life changing spiritual journey, although those things may have happened in a roundabout way. This year has always been about people, the beautiful and broken people who make up the body of the Church in the world. Whether I was aware of it or not, this time has brought me closer to the reality of humanity.



The path to the Mount Meru waterfall

I'll end by explaining the title of this article. "Pole" (pronounced po-lay) means sorry in Swahili, while "pole pole" means slowly. Both phrases were oft repeated to my cohort and I as we trekked down a muddy hill to a waterfall halfway up Mt. Meru. Our guides would sometimes apologize with one "pole" when we slipped (which was often), or two "pole"s when we got too excited and rushed ahead only to realize we were about to place a hand or foot directly in an ant highway (those bites HURT). I didn't really understand the distinction until I saw POLE POLE written out on a road (just like you see STOP AHEAD in big block letters). Basically, "pole pole" is a different way of saying slow down, hold your horses [insert more idioms here].

It is my reminder to myself and my challenge to you to do things differently. What lessons has God been placing in front of you that you've been too busy to see?

It would be remiss of me to say that it is only because I traveled travel halfway around the globe that I learned these things without addressing the facts that:

A) I could only travel halfway around the globe for a year because I have a whole lot of privilege (check out the next page for some of my thoughts on privilege)

and

B) It is not at all necessary to travel in order to do some self-work

The unavoidable truth is that you cannot live in a different country for going on 10 months and not realize some things. All my experiences in other countries have shown me that we really do not get some things right. [American Exceptionalism](#) runs deep, and it is hard to pull yourself out of that mindset when you are living in it. However, traveling just to "find yourself" doesn't work.

Maybe that sounds a bit contradictory: me saying that traveling is a privilege and shouldn't be undertaken simply to find oneself, then turning around to say I have been irrevocably changed by my time in Atteridgeville. I'm afraid I don't have an easy solution for that conundrum. Confronting privilege is never easy or neat, and there is no box to wrap it all up in, but it is necessary to do so in order to follow the path Jesus walked.

THE OTHER P-WORD

Welcome back to the alphabet series! If you are following my newsletter at all (by which I mean if you read the last issue), you'll notice that I now have a penchant for titling articles this way. This time around I want to talk about the *other* P-word (not "pole).

Privilege

As in most things, I am not an expert, but I do have some experience in the world of academia when it comes to privilege. My dad likes to joke that sending me away to a liberal state school made me a social justice warrior (thanks University of Maryland!). While that is not entirely true, college *did* give me the vocabulary to talk about a lot of things that have bothered or interested me most of my life. One of those things is privilege. It's a term that gets thrown around a lot these days, and as I believe in the incredible power of words to shape our realities, I

"⁷ For who sees anything different in you?^[b] What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?"
1 Corinthians 4:7

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."
Luke 12:48

also think it's important to take some space and define privilege as I understand and use the term here.

If you google "privilege" you'll get the dictionary definition of "a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group." I'd say that's pretty easy to understand, although in the colloquial sense the stakes are normally a little lower; parents might punish kids by revoking their privilege to video games or dessert or cell phones. Basically, there's the status quo, the everyday way of doing things, and then there is a privilege: something special that shouldn't be expected.

HOWEVER, what I'm talking about right now is social privilege. A great way of understanding privilege in this way is to think of it as something everyone *should* experience.

Note

Although I have academic experience with social privilege and similar concepts, I am by no means an authority. I'd love to be in conversation with you about this, and everything in my newsletters! Let me know if you disagree with anything, or just have thoughts to share!

For example, Sian Ferguson writes “A male acquaintance of mine initially struggled to understand the concept of privilege. He once said to me, ‘**Men don’t often experience gender-based street harassment, but that’s not a privilege. It’s something everyone should expect.**’ Correct. Everyone should expect to be treated that way. Everyone has a right to be treated that way. The problem is that certain people aren’t treated that way.” (Emphasis added)

We can define privilege as a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group.

Sian Ferguson

So there is a subtle difference here in what we say when dessert is a privilege that can be easily taken away if a child misbehaves, and that an upper class white man is benefitting from privilege.

Again, I like how Ferguson puts it: “Privilege doesn’t mean your life is easy or that you didn’t work hard. It simply means that you don’t have to face the obstacles others have to endure.” This addresses the feeling that many people get when you point out they have privilege; their initial response is that they worked hard to get what they have or get where they are, and insinuating that

The thing about this view, besides the fact that ignoring one’s own privilege doesn’t make it go away, is that it is a fallacy in the first place. Let’s be real, most of the people reading this newsletter probably belong to one Christian denomination or another (although if you don’t, Hi, Glad to have you here!), and as Christians we (try) try to live by the Jesus’ example and Scripture. And both Scripture and Jesus say that none of the things that we have are our own. The liturgical offertory prayer “We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us - our selves, our time, our possessions, signs of Your gracious love.” might be ringing a bell here. All that we have we have only because God first gave it to us, so as much as you might have worked hard for that job or house or status, it all comes from God anyway.

Let me close by saying this is only the beginning. I have many more thoughts on privilege, and lots of other fun buzzwords like intersectionality and expectation, but I think this is a great place to break and process. Hopefully you have something to think about today or this week from my writing. I hope to share more in my next newsletter and on my blog about how these topics have intersected with my experiences as a YAGM, so hopefully you look forward to that!

⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—* ⁹ *not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Ephesians 2: 8-9

FAMILY PHOTOS



(Above, Left) The cohort in Tanzania, pulling silly faces as usual. Dad was able to visit me in Atteridgeville in May, and see some of the people I work with!



(Left, Below) Facetiming with Mom while wrapped up against the nighttime chill (time and hemisphere differences). Dad and I hanging out and eating delicious food while in Johannesburg for his work.



TANZANIA RETREAT



Worship at Arusha Community Church.



Some fun (challenging) stairs we took on our hike to the waterfall.



The waterfall at the end of the hike!



A view of Mt. Meru, Kilimanjaro's smaller sister.



Alex the snake whisperer.



Varying levels of excitement
for the Meserani Snake Park.



Yes, that is me holding three
snakes!

A still life piece I call
“Contemplation”





(Above) I promise
there is a leopard in
that tree!

(Below) Just a few of
the zebras we saw at
Tarangire National
Park.

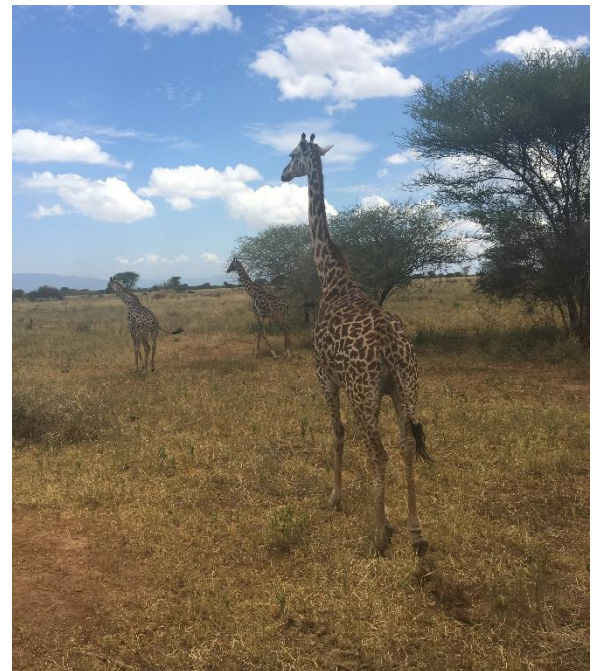


(Below) A young elephant friend!

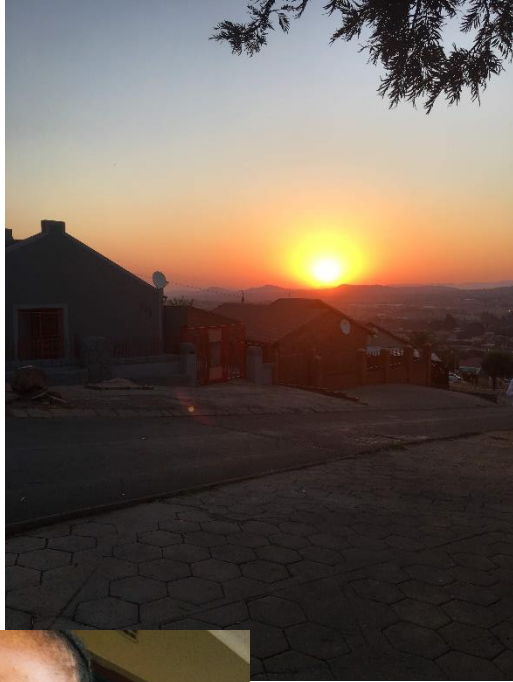


(Above) Some water
buffalo.

(Below) Giraffes look
just as weird walking as
you imagine.



ATTERIDGEVILLE SIGHTS



(Clockwise from bottom left)

Mashoto and I after a run.

The sunset over Atteridgeville is one of my favorite sights.

Mashoto, her sister Matshepo, and I after Easter Service.

A bee friend I rescued from the road!



Want to hear more about the books I'm reading or the songs I'm listening to? Want to hear more stories from my time in Atteridgeville, or just want to chat?

Send me an email at toriyagmsa@gmail.com or drop by my blog at www.toriinsouthafrica.wordpress.com. You can sign up for updates for my blog or let me know if you want to get these newsletters when they come out!



May the Peace of Christ Go With You

-Tori-



Sources and Suggested Reading

Sian Ferguson's Privilege 101: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/what-is-privilege/>

Eat Pray Love & Privilege: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/eat-pray-love-critics-sho_b_685231

Privilege & Travel: <https://traverse-blog.com/2017/09/20/white-travel-privilege/>

Social Privilege Defined: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_privilege

Confronting Privilege: <https://goodmenproject.com/guy-talk/how-travel-made-me-confront-white-privilege/>

Great Quote: *"When you went to Africa, you said 'you were the minority for the first time in your life.' That's not true. You have been the only adult in a room full of children, the only man in room full of women, the only non-incarcerated person in a jail. In America if you were a minority at a hip-hop concert in Compton, you would still have the privilege that accrues unbidden to persons designated as white, with all of the political, social, and economic access that comes with it.*

What you experienced in Africa, Tom, was that the apparatus that supports the dominance of white skin was absent. It has nothing to do with being a minority someplace, you were free of the prison that is whiteness."

American Exceptionalism: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_exceptionalism

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/01/american-exceptionalism-is-a-dangerous-myth.html>

American Exceptionalism In Trump's America:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/01/yes-america-can-still-lead-the-world/576427/>

Christians and Privilege; <https://relevantmagazine.com/current16/its-time-christians-acknowledge-privilege/>