

I'm Jeff, Karl and Esther's son. While I may refer to my siblings here, these thoughts are my own.

I was born and raised in Papua New Guinea. I moved to the U.S., with my parents and younger brother Mark, in 1982. I was 18. In between I spent about 5 years in boarding school in Melbourne, Australia. Psychologically integrating 3 social/cultural spaces is not an easy task but not all bad either. Indeed, at certain moments, it can be a source of identity, strength, and insight.

The first year in the U.S. I lived with my parents and brother in St. Louis. It was difficult for all of us. We each had common and specific tasks and hurdles to grapple with. I was angry and worried. I was often not pleasant to be around. Looking back, I think I most immediately missed my friends from boarding school. I knew I would probably never see them again. I was socially, and to a degree culturally, adrift. American culture was familiar but not understood in depth. In an attempt to figure out and integrate the strange and familiar I started keeping a journal. I continued to write in it for the next 20 years or so. The assimilation process is profoundly long term. This helped me, the newcomer, adapt and integrate.

Boarding school, the interlude years, was an odd, difficult, and fun experience. Boarding schools are a culture shock in themselves. Especially for an American from PNG going to an Australian one. Overall, boarding schools are not a good idea; confining adolescents together in a relatively small space doesn't work too well. Ultimately, however, I acquired some close friendships, some of which survive to this day. On the other hand, it was a cultural interlude that complicated settling in the U.S. My adolescent brain was struggling with the ways of life of 3 distinct places. Time is the main way to resolve this. This requires patience (it cannot be forced) which I don't have in abundance.

What helped me the most in adapting to the U.S., and accepting that home and place of origin can be multifaceted and bifurcated between head and heart, was higher education. I ended up going to college in New Orleans and graduate school in Tennessee. Ever since I have spent my time teaching. Higher education provided a creative structure and consistent projects to work on. It was mentally distracting in a positive way. This helped me relax as a type of newcomer; the feeling of being outside looking in diminished a little. I wonder if it gave me a place and capacity to realize that, in one way or another, I was a

stranger in all 3 countries that were home at one point. While this can be very painful, it also has benefits. It is- It's what I am.

Finally, some general observations and thoughts I've had over the years:

I, as well as my siblings, have moved a lot. What strikes me is that not every move was absolutely necessary. It's not the moving itself, not the act, but the willingness to. Willingness is not the equivalent of a desire to. I am always ready to leave; I understand it may be necessary or just because.

After all these years in the U.S. I still see American culture and life somewhat like a stranger. There are still gaps in my knowledge and a sense of puzzlement.

I am also puzzled by the ideas of citizenship and nationalism. Psychologically, "feeling-wise," I'm not sure what they are. I can see the consequences, but I don't know what they are. I don't feel/experience them.

Home, where one is from, is both intellectual and emotional. When they are split is a profound dilemma for the outsider.

Not as much as in the past, but I can experience intense and painful nostalgia. This is collective and individual. I've realized that figuring out the most helpful way to confront this can be very lonely and long. So it is good to rely on each other.