

# A Global Nomad

Hannah Lai 賴以行

As I write, I'm currently surrounded by unpacked boxes of household items, suitcases full of clothes and furniture placed around randomly in our 'new' house. We've just moved, but that's not unusual in our family. I'm also in the process of packing up to go abroad...again. Not just a holiday over the break, but a full-length semester overseas, with a few adventures tucked in between.

Dear readers, my name is Hannah Lai and my life story has earned me the title of global nomad, world traveler, but you might know me most commonly as a TCK – Third Culture Kids. What is it like to grow up across the world, having different countries and cultures embedded in the fabric of your childhood? It is easier experienced than told, but I will try my best. It is similar to that feeling when you change houses, change churches, jobs or schools. You switch your surroundings, your familiarities and parts of your routine. But when you move to other countries it's on a completely different scale which intensifies the challenges but also rewards. In all truth, I am just an ordinary person with an extraordinary God. I hope that by the end of this you can see how God's hand has guided me throughout the changes in my life.

My story, like many other missionary kids or



TCKs, involves numerous countries and cultures. My parents are both from Hong Kong but after they got married, moved to Sydney, Australia where my brother and I were born. When I was about 6, my family moved to Kenya,

East Africa to work with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

I went to an international school specifically catered for missionary kids from all over the world, representing more than 20 different nationalities. From the beginning, God was teaching me about Himself and I witnessed the love of God through the caring staff, teachers and dorm parents. It was a boarding school and I formed incredibly close friendships with my dorm sisters as we handled teenage drama, conflict and happiness together. Departing those friends at graduation was a terrible, bittersweet yet a joyful time of our lives. We went from living together daily to becoming continents away, only to hear from each other months at a time. In retrospect, it is clear that God knew what this painful goodbye would do to us. By losing our closest friends, we learn to reach out and find God, though He is not far from us.

My life in Africa also imprinted on my heart an unchangeable desire to stand up for the dignity of the lost. The victims of poverty are neither helpless nor voiceless; instead when given even a small dose of

compassion they can end up appreciating life more than the wealthiest person on earth. I desired to care, listen, partner and advocate for the less fortunate. This desire has directed me to major in International Development in my study at university and I hope one day to help disadvantaged people for the sake of God's glory.

Before returning to Australia for university education, I took a year in China and Hong Kong trying to learn Chinese. It was my first time to spend a large amount of time in a developed country and ironically, the region that I was ethnically from. Fresh out of high school, I was fixated on having fun first, and putting God second. Though I did attend church majority of the Sundays I was there, it was merely out of obligation and habit. I found myself looking for a church that fit my idea of 'fun'. So instead of sticking to one church, I would hop between churches depending on my mood on

Sundays. Though I met many

people, there was nothing planted firmly to make me grow in my faith and I became a worn out and frustrated Christian.

Finally after 13 years of living overseas, I was back where I started: Sydney, Australia.

I would not call the only Australian

it going "home" because thing about me was my passport. No doubt my multicultural upbringing and vast travels have taught me to be adaptive and sensitive to new cultures. But even after a year and a half of staying in Sydney, everyday has been a struggle to adjust, I would not lie.

Could it be in these times, when everything is stripped away from us, that we seek and search for God the most? I believe so. In this past year of feeling lonely and restless, I have never dug deeper or studied the Bible harder. I would not have done so if I was complacent with my circle of friends or my longing for adventure and fun. God took the effort to remove all those distractions out of my life, though



He knew it would cause me pain. God is sovereign, and our hearts are restless until we realize that truth. I am still learning to let that truth be the cornerstone of my life.

People often ask me "Where do you call home" or "What culture do you feel most comfortable in?" I believe this is a relevant question for all Christians, not just TCKs. Lately God has challenged me to live, not as a citizen of this world, but a citizen of heaven. It means that my culture should reflect where I'm going and not just where I came from. If we are too focused on the present world, then God's future glorious kingdom is undermined. Can people see how eagerly we wait to be with God for eternity? Is your Jesus culture stronger than your African, Asian or Australian culture?

If growing up global is God's way of shaking my identity so I can identify with Him, then I am thankful for the painful departures, the tearful goodbyes and the lonely re-adjustments. I am beginning to understand the challenge James gives us: to consider trials as "pure joy". In retrospect, I can see how extraordinary God works in our lives. God's hand is behind the scenes, using those tragedies to teach us how to really understand God's big picture for humanity.

I pray that God will continue to teach us to centre our mission on God's kingdom, both future and present. With our feet willing to follow wherever God leads, yet with our hearts and lives reflecting our citizenship in heaven.

Thank you for reading and now, I'll go back to unpacking the boxes and preparing my suitcase.

(作者在澳洲出生，隨父母在東非宣教，現在澳洲就讀大學)