

Things I'll miss

Yesterday was a day that could have been unremarkable. But it wasn't. Maybe because my mind is dwelling on the idea of leaving and what that finally means.

So beyond thinking about the future and how terrifying it is, besides stomach-churning at the idea of trying to find a job that I won't hate and the sinking worry that I may not be able to get into grad school, I've started to wonder what it will be like to leave Guinea.

It's different leaving here. You leave high school and college knowing that those friends you'd like to stay in touch with are there at the end of a phone or computer line. Guinea isn't like that. Although phone reception is spreading, it doesn't exist in Santou yet, and even after it gets there I don't know how many people will have access to it. so when I leave, I may never hear from or see any of my Guinean friends again.

It's easy to imagine their lives going on exactly as they do now, following seasonal patterns of work and rest, most days much like the ones before and after them. But it's also easy to imagine them getting sick and waiting too long to get inadequate medical help. Just since I've been there I have seen three cases where people died on their way to the hospital in Telimele. More than a year ago now, it was my best friend dying in the back seat of a taxi while I was away on a trip. Death is always present and always possible.

And so certain moments are starting to seem more significant. Yesterday I visited the national museum, and on the way back we met some Liberian women who have been here as refugees from the war. One had been in Guinea for sixteen years. They are going home sometime around April. Imagine what that feels like, to have been away for sixteen years while your home is being torn apart by war, and now to be about to return to a country where things are finally looking up. I asked them what they thought of their new president. Unanimously, they declared that they loved her. I hope that this is the beginning of a real recovery for them.

Anyway, rattling on. But those are some things that I'll miss.