

Not the Whole Story



I was born and brought up in Kenya, in a happy, wealthy family. We had servants to take care of us, and we had everything we could ever want or need. As a child I took all this for granted. I didn't even know there was another side to the story. [Read more.](#)

One of our servants was named Rosa. When she first came to live with us, we were both eight. When she wasn't working, we used to spend hours playing together. She was my best friend. My mother told me that she came from a very poor family, but it wasn't until I visited her family in their village three or four years later that I realized exactly what poor meant.

Her house was a simple hut, one room shared by the whole family. Their lives were very simple, too. For the first time in my life I saw people who had less than me. For a moment I was an outsider, like a curious tourist with a camera. It was like visiting a new world. Once I got over that initial shock, what really stayed with me wasn't the poverty, but the smiles and the warm welcome. And my view of my home, of my country, of Africa, had changed.

When I went to study at a university in the United States, the opposite happened. Most of the people I met knew just one story about Africa: a story of poverty and war. They were surprised by my clothes and my taste in music. They asked me where I had learned to speak English so well. When I explained that it was my first language, they said they didn't know that English was spoken in Africa. I told them that in Kenya, English was an official language. When they asked if they could see photos of Africa, I showed them photos of my home and my family and my school. I told them about my best friend Rosa, too. I wanted them to know that Kenya has a thousand truths, a thousand stories to tell.

And I realized that I was just as guilty. Before I arrived in the United States, I had only known one story, fed by images from Hollywood, showing beautiful people leading beautiful lives. When I arrived, I saw so many other stories—needy people living on the street, high unemployment, incredible crime rates and beautiful landscapes that took my breath away. It reminded me that we have to try and see all the different stories that every country has to tell.

What about you? What about your country? Does the world only see one side of the story of where you come from? If so, what is that story? How would you like people to see your culture?

Answer the questions.

- 1 Who was Rosa?
- 2 What did the writer learn when she visited Rosa's village?
- 3 In what way did she have a similar experience in the United States?
- 4 What did her experience in the United States teach her?

Read the blog post again. Mark the statements true (T) or false (F).
Correct the false statements.

- 1 The writer came from a poor family.
- 2 Rosa lived in a poor village.
- 3 English isn't spoken in Kenya.
- 4 The writer knew a lot about the United States before she went there.
- 5 The writer learned very little about the United States while she was there.
- 6 The writer believes that every country has one story to tell.