

Amanda Treeshia Silva Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Amanda Treeshia Silva served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Indonesia from 2013 to 2015 in an English education and youth development program.

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Oral History Interview

with

Amanda Treeshia Silva

January 5, 2017
Bethesda, Maryland

By Patricia Wand

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

WAND: [00:00:05] Today is January 5th, 2017. This is Patricia Ann Wand and I am interviewing Amanda Treeshia Silva, who served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Indonesia from 2013 until 2015 in an English education and youth development project. First, Amanda, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for this important project. We appreciate your time and your sharing your reflections and your stories. Our focus will be on your Peace Corps experience, but I'll be asking you questions also about the decisions in your that brought you to Peace Corps and how you finally achieved your goal of getting there and then things that may have, how that may have affected your life so far.

WAND: [00:01:07] So my first question really regards your pre Peace Corps experience. And let's go back to your childhood. Can you tell us a little bit about where you grew up and what your family of origin is like, where they lived, etcetera?

SILVA: [00:01:28] Sure. Thank you so much for having me, Pat. I was born and raised in Staten Island, New York, and I went to an all girls Catholic school. And up until I think I was seven, I didn't really understand where I came from. My parents are ethnically Sri Lankan, but I was never really told that I was explicitly Sri Lankan. I was just, I thought that I was white. For a long time I thought I was German, because my dad worked for the German mission, and everyone that I went to school with was not my skin color. So I figured I'd definitely be the white version of my family. So when I was seven, I went to Sri Lanka for the first time and that was the first time that I really realized where I came from and what my origins were, or how my family got to America.

SILVA: [00:02:22] And I had like a sense of privilege, or I understood like my blessings for being born in America, because I met my cousins and aunts and uncles and realized, you know, the roots of our family. And after that, I kind of just, there was like a burden on me almost, kind of like a burden, but something where I felt like I had to fulfill all this potential. You know, I had been the first, I was the first one born ever in America, first American citizen in my entire family. And as I mentioned before, my parents both come from large families. So my mother is one of six and my dad is one of six. And I felt like I had a lot to fulfill for them, for the blessings that they gave me, to have me be born in America. And after they sent me to a great school and I always tried my best. And I felt this calling to kind of serve America, to serve my country.

SILVA: [00:03:21] And I had won awards for community service. I was really involved with my community in Staten Island and it just kept going forward from there. I was awarded, I raised \$10,000 for the tsunami relief fund when I was 14 and ran a campaign and got five-ton truckloads and did 323 hours of service a year for the Juvenile Diabetes Fund and just all over the place. And Rotary had awarded me a scholarship for college, and it just kind of all spiraled from there. And I had contemplated going into the Navy or serving in the military somehow. And then my courses took a different route. And when I was 17, I decided that I wanted to do Peace Corps. And ever since then, everything that I had done was to get me ready for the Peace Corps and my application there.

SILVA: [00:04:21] So my junior year of college, I went to American University. I don't know if I'm going too far.

WAND: [00:04:30] Actually, you're going perfectly.

SILVA: [00:04:35] Oh, great.

WAND: [00:04:35] But before I let you get into college in this discussion, maybe you can tell us about your, uh, more about, a little more about your family.

SILVA: [00:04:44] Sure.

WAND: [00:04:45] Did you, do you have siblings?

SILVA: [00:04:46] I do.

WAND: [00:04:47] And you apparently, I'm guessing, maybe are the oldest of the family?

SILVA: [00:04:54] Mm hmm.

WAND: [00:04:54] So what did your, what did your mother do and what did your father do and also how about languages that you learned at home?

SILVA: [00:05:06] Sure. Yeah. So my father is, works for the German mission to the UN. That's how my family came here. He lived in Germany. He moved to Germany when he was 19 and started out kind of as an entrepreneur. He started a belt designing thing and was really popular with his belt designs in Germany for a long time in Bonn. And then Bloomingdales wanted to buy his designs and he came to New York and got kind of swindled out of his designs. They were stolen by another person and his entire business. I think he just felt really shot from that. He returned to Germany and during his time in Germany he got very close with a lot of affluent individuals and one of them was the German ambassador in Bonn at the time. And the ambassador says, Silva, don't worry, I'll take care of you.

SILVA: [00:06:01] And my dad after that, you know, started working with him there and eventually they opened up a contract for him to be the first foreigner to work for the German government in the UN. So my father went back to Sri Lanka for my grandfather's funeral in 1989 and my mother, who is nine years younger than him, attended the funeral because their families had known each other. Growing up, my dad went to school with her older sisters and one of my mom's older sisters actually married my dad's best friend in Germany, so he was the best man in that wedding and they had a lot of ties that way. And then my dad comes back and he saw my mom and she was 22. And the last time he saw her, she was probably like a teenager or younger. And goes to my grandmother that night.

SILVA: [00:06:58] Now my dad is the youngest of the six, so he's the, he's only one that isn't married. My grandfather was lining up potential prospects for him because they came from a very wealthy and affluent family at the time. And it just felt like, you know, you can't, can't give away the, this isn't just anybody and blah, blah, blah. And so all of his siblings who had all married for love were all trying to force them down this path of arranged. And my father is not one to really care for the opinions of others. And went to my grandmother, you know, my poor grandmother, who is like mourning the death of her husband and has her son back for a little bit. And he's like, I met the woman that I'm going to marry. Just looked at my mom and said this and then went the next day to her house and said, you know, I'm going to marry you. And courted her for the next year and then came back after he was all settled in New York. And they got married.

SILVA: [00:07:57] And she pretty much spent her honeymoon in Staten Island and has been there since. So my mom started out, you know, kind of as a housewife. She was really, my mom was really extremely intelligent, but my dad preferred for her to be at home at the time. And I think it's just because he wasn't sure, like, how to reconcile the traditional versus the Western cultures, although he himself was very Westernized. He was struggling, I think, with like reconciling between the two. So there was a lot of my upbringing too was being this pet project, this experiment between both Sri Lankan and American cultures and, you know, how to be both the perfect, you know, Sri Lankan girl or family, sister or daughter, versus

having to be well educated and out in society and serving my community, etcetera.

SILVA: [00:08:56] So my mother started out housekeeping part time and then after that was a maid for a while. She was a nanny and had always worked really hard. And my, I am the oldest of three, so my younger brother is two years younger than I. And he and I were very close. Of course, we fought when we were younger. And then in 2000, ten years after me, my dad decided he wanted a millennium baby, which I found out to my reluctance and my, and my youngest brother was born. And he is fantastic. So when he was born, I raised him because my mother started working full time. And she, so she started out doing night shifts and she worked at E-ZPass, at the company. So kind of working with more like administrative level things. And it was the first time that she really worked in an office or like a team environment, I'd say, because she's used to kind of working by herself normally.

SILVA: [00:10:02] And she excelled there. She went from working the nighttime shifts, which you have to do for the first 3 to 6 months, and then after that moved to working like a regular 9 to 5 shift. And we all took our part, you know, taking care of my youngest brother. And then my grandparents were living with us too, so I was taking care of them and it was like going back and forth like. So at ten, I was put on with a lot of different responsibilities to help our family. And, you know, I would leave school to go pick up my little brother. He would come with me to my extracurricular activities, to art club or Interact club and the like, and we would go home on the bus together and then I would carry all of his stuff and him because he'd complain about walking seven blocks home. And so that was.

WAND: [00:10:53] And he was how old at that point?

SILVA: [00:10:54] He was, um, when he was four. It was when he was four years until he was seven or eight years old. Yeah. So yeah. And I remember this one time my mom had to work during the weekend and I had to go do turkey baskets with the, with the Rotary. And it was the morning and so we had to take the bus out to mid Island somewhere and I forgot to pack like a thicker jacket for him. So he was wearing like a sweatshirt and it was, it

seemed like enough, but it was when the weather was changing. So I had just a sweatshirt on and I took my sweatshirt off and he's wearing this giant sweatshirt, you know, and walking around and eating donuts. And it's just like this image that I can't really get rid of. And everyone loved him because, you know, it's just you don't really get like the little cute kids around all the time.

SILVA: [00:11:45] So that was a lot of my, a lot of my high school and experience was taking care of him. It's like there wasn't really me without him, especially for Rotary and Interact because those are things that I did outside of my everyday academic life. Um, yeah. So I like to think that it, that it rubbed off on him but.

WAND: [00:12:07] Time will tell, right?

SILVA: [00:12:08] Yeah. Yeah.

WAND: [00:12:10] So which was the high school that you went to on Staten Island?

SILVA: [00:12:15] I went to Notre Dame Academy. And I actually went there because my uncle was the janitor there when I was in elementary school. So when my parents were deciding where to put me in school, my uncle said, don't send her to any of those schools, send her to my school. And so I was there from pre-K until 2008.

WAND: [00:12:37] Wow.

SILVA: [00:12:38] Yeah.

WAND: [00:12:38] That was a long run.

SILVA: [00:12:39] It's a long run. Yeah. And it was funny because when I graduated in eighth grade from there, I did, I was one of the, our class speakers I guess, our graduation speakers. And I just remember when I was applying for, for high school, there was no place that I felt that I belonged more. And it's funny because I think originally when going there,

I didn't really feel that I belonged. So it's funny how a place becomes home.

WAND: [00:13:09] Truly. So how did you happen to choose American University then from your, for your university studies?

SILVA: [00:13:19] Well, I was really between New York and D.C. I knew that I was definitely very much a New Yorker growing up. And in the sense that you believe that New York is the best place, all the opportunities are there, um, the, you know, why, why would you need to leave? And that really does happen for a lot of New Yorkers that stay in their boroughs and go to school in New York and then raise their families in New York, etcetera. And I also kind of wanted to explore what it would be like for myself. Like, who am I outside of my familial duties and who am I when I'm not a sister or a daughter? And I think my father understood that as well. He was, he encouraged me, I think, to look elsewhere, even though somewhat reluctant to let go of that.

SILVA: [00:14:07] So I decided on D.C. I was looking at schools and had gotten scholarships to Fordham and St. John's University, but I wasn't really a fan of St. John's in Queens. I liked St. John's on Staten Island and I also knew that I had to leave Staten Island. Um, fun fact, Staten Island is actually the largest population of Sri Lankans outside of Sri Lanka. So my parents are community leaders. They started the Sri Lankan Catholic Community of New York and New Jersey and it's probably going on about 18 or 19 years now. And it's over 1,000 people. They're always welcoming new families and people and our community's just growing. It's just amazing what they've done.

SILVA: [00:14:53] And but because of that, because people know my parents, I could not walk anywhere without getting a call later on about saying, did you know that your daughter was walking down the street? You know, it's just the littlest things. I saw her in a store with a friend, like you know. So it's this idea of just always being watched and not really being able to live freely, in a sense. So I think my parents understood that, and I wanted to be in a place that offered me a lot of opportunities. I wanted to, I'm very passionate about my art, and I wanted to be in a place. But I knew that I

liked politics. So I wanted to be at a school that had a strong art program so I could do my bachelor's in art and but would also allow me all the possibilities to be current in politics and have all of the events and everything that I needed.

SILVA: [00:15:43] And I actually really wanted to go to Georgetown originally because I fell in love with it after the open house. And then I had looked at GW, wasn't really a fan of city campuses, and I looked at AU and, um, went to. My parents obviously looked Catholic, but I wasn't really a fan of that. So I, it was between Georgetown and AU and then I went to AU's multicultural overnight. And they have this thing where they offer prospective students that are still deciding opportunities to get to know the campus. And we stayed there for, you know, with another student in their dorm and they showed us around campus. We would look at some classes and sit in on them. I forgot what it's called. Auditing, I guess. Yeah, we audited a class.

WAND: [00:16:32] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:16:32] And then really like, I really enjoyed it. And it's funny because one of the professors whose classes I audited I took later on, so I started out at AU that way and I just felt like it was a great, diverse community and I really liked the students. I liked that people came from all over the place and there was a large international component and the campus is very unique. It was small enough, small enough that I would get to see someone that I knew every day, but big enough that I would meet someone new every day. So it seemed like the perfect size. And vast, but still connected. So. And it had a strong art program that I really liked. So. Chose AU.

WAND: [00:17:18] Right. And so just quickly here, let's see, how did AU figure into your Peace Corps decision and when did you, when did you gel around a Peace Corps option and?

SILVA: [00:17:33] I think I had already been set on Peace Corps when I came to AU, and it was just a matter of how was I going. I had built up Peace Corps so much that I thought that I needed every single experience under

my belt before they would ever accept me into the Peace Corps. Um. So I was, I did everything at school. I tried to take advantage of everything that came my way. And I was vice president of programming for campus, and I managed the residence hall association budgets there and all the on-campus activities. And I did student union board and did concerts and event planning. I helped found Delta Phi Epsilon, the professional Foreign Service sorority on campus, and it's now in it's probably like seventh or eighth year now. Sixth, sixth or, I don't know, something like that.

WAND: [00:18:27] What is that? Delta.

SILVA: [00:18:28] Delta Phi.

WAND: [00:18:29] Phi.

SILVA: [00:18:31] Epsilon. And it's a professional Foreign Service sorority. There's also a fraternity, and that really helped mold. So I was the second president in the chapter's history. And then I moved to Sri Lanka in the middle. I couldn't, I paid my way through school. So I worked a lot of odd jobs while doing internships. And so I, I never had an off, an off time. I was, I was always working part time jobs while doing an internship and taking on a full course load. So I would, um. I started out at the, at the dorm mission at CDS International at the time, and now it's called Cultural Vistas, but they work with international exchange programs. So that was 2007, 2008. And then did marketing at AU. [phone rings]

WAND: [00:19:34] Keep talking.

SILVA: [00:19:34] Sure. I did marketing at American for an entire year for American University's marketing department. And then continued and spent the rest of the next year as the vice president of programming for campus and.

WAND: [00:19:53] Programming of which?

SILVA: [00:19:54] All, all on-campus programming. So the Founder's Day Ball. It's like the equivalent. So I worked very closely with student government.

WAND: [00:20:03] And Gail Hanson's office?

SILVA: [00:20:05] Yeah, I know Gail.

WAND: [00:20:05] Student life.

SILVA: [00:20:06] And so it's. Yeah, so we did. There's RHA, the Residence Hall Association, and the student government and the Residence Hall Association has jurisdiction over all of on-campus housing and what programming is done for them. So I had eight vice presidents of programming for each hall and then I coordinated what they were doing and then I did for all of campus. So we had, um, it's the equivalent of the vice president for the student government. And it was at a point where like I had made so many connections through my event planning at AU that I could easily just pick up the phone and get a deal somewhere, anywhere. And my senior year, it was kind of, you know, I could have either been vice president of AU or I could have done something new.

SILVA: [00:20:55] And I decided to pioneer instead, which is where I, you know, I didn't, I didn't want to do something like that. So instead, I decided to do, to be president of DPE, of the sorority. And instead I was able to lay out this foundation and a legacy and tradition that's still continuing on. I built up our portfolio I think for, and we actually ended up fighting for our legality on campus because they were, we lost our student activities advisor. So we had to refute why because they didn't understand the difference between why it was a professional organization. And so we found our alumni from the sixties and fifties and brought them back and worked with Professor Abdul Aziz Said, who's our, he is our mentor for advisor for the organization. And met with student activities and presented the case for why we needed to exist.

SILVA: [00:21:55] And it was just a very funny, you know, we gave them like a 32 page legal document for making the case for why we were an asset to campus, because they had frozen all of our financial funds without, uh, without reasoning for it. And it was just very interesting. So I liked pioneering all of that. And I did a benefit concert with scholarships for

Burma, and it was nice to be at a point where in D.C. and at AU, where I had utilized my experiences and opportunities to the point where I felt that I had reached a potential to, to help other organizations through my connections. I don't know that I could do that anymore, but.

WAND: [00:22:40] Right. So you went, um. So what years were you attending American University?

SILVA: [00:22:46] 2008 to 2012.

WAND: [00:22:50] Okay. And then when did you start your Peace Corps application? Did you do it while you were at American University, or did you wait until after you graduated?

SILVA: [00:23:04] I worked on it for two years before I felt like I could submit it, and that was actually forced, it was forcefully submitted because they were changing the application process. So they said that if you don't get your applications in before this time, then all of your data is going to be erased. And I was panicking because I was working on it for so long I didn't want everything to be erased.

SILVA: [00:23:27] So I went to Sri Lanka. So I think that's where I left off before was, because I paid my way through school I couldn't afford study abroad. So I was deciding, you know, I'm going to spend a summer but I'm going to work somewhere and I don't know where yet. And I really wanted to go to Africa, but then I couldn't find a program that I liked enough. And then my parents said, well, why don't you just go to Sri Lanka? So I hadn't. It was actually, it worked out really well. My grandmother, my grandmother had passed away in 2010. So in 2011, I went to Sri Lanka. And it was the first time, it was the sixth time that I had gone to visit, but the first time that I had ever gone to live by myself and wasn't really living like a sheltered life.

SILVA: [00:24:09] So I taught. Originally I was supposed to be working with a humanitarian organization, but because the war had ended in 2009, all humanitarian organizations had left, had left the country for relief efforts and everything. So that internship that I originally had was lost, but it

worked out to my benefit. So I still decided I was going. And I worked at Aquinas University as an English diploma teacher for speech, and was there from usually like 8:00 to noon for classes. So I would teach about two or three classes and I had eight classes altogether that I taught throughout the week.

WAND: [00:24:47] So you were teaching English?

SILVA: [00:24:49] Mm hmm. I was teaching English. And they were, um, students that ranged in age from like 19 to 35.

WAND: [00:24:57] Adults.

SILVA: [00:24:57] Yeah. To adults. And, um, it was great. I had preliminary level classes to foundation classes to advanced and final level classes. And when I finished working there, I spent the rest of the day as the marketing administrative coordinator for an international gem company, and they sell gemstones to Chinese ex-pat populations in Colombo. And so I did their press releases, did their launch parties, and designed their campaigns that were going forth. I had to learn Mandarin in Sinhalese so that I could help target the Chinese population. So, you know, I had to learn how to say like topaz and, like, what time is it? Or just some very random statements. And so that was fun. And, uh.

WAND: [00:25:57] And was your Peace Corps application in process at this point? So you, you delivered, if you will, the application before you went to Sri Lanka?

SILVA: [00:26:06] No.

WAND: [00:26:07] No.

SILVA: [00:26:07] I was still working on it.

WAND: [00:26:08] You were still working on it while you were in Sri Lanka?

SILVA: [00:26:09] I was still working on it. I was building, I was building the. So pretty much I had finished, I had finished off my sophomore year. And then in the middle of my junior year, I started my application for Peace Corps and that's when I decided I need to go abroad. And I was, I was like, I'm going to go to Sri Lanka and I have to build this up if I'm going to, if I'm going to get into Peace Corps. And so I did that. And then after Sri Lanka, I still have my senior year left. So I was still building it up.

WAND: [00:26:39] So you were there in Sri Lanka for the summer, summer of 2011?

SILVA: [00:26:43] Yeah. So there's about 3 to 4 months there. And. Yeah. So when my students went to their final exams, I worked at the Missionaries of Charity with Mother Teresa's nuns and took care of a ward of elderly women that were. It's essentially like an orphanage for the elderly because they're rejected by their families or aren't being taken care of. And they had some younger women who were also orphans, and but really a handful of them. And they also helped do the house chores and everything. So I went there every morning at about 5:00 a.m. and helped do the cleaning and taking off the bed sheets and giving showers to the women. And I would carry them from their beds to the showers and give them a sponge bath and then put them back in their clothes and bring them to bed. And then we would make breakfast and feed them and then they would do prayers.

SILVA: [00:27:40] And that's when I would, I would usually, sometimes I would stay and usually I would leave to go to my job, to the international, to the international gem company. Because the students were in finals so.

WAND: [00:27:50] Oh.

SILVA: [00:27:50] I didn't have to teach at that time.

WAND: [00:27:51] Right. Right. So, okay, your Peace Corps application then, you actually submitted while you were a senior?

SILVA: [00:28:01] I submitted it after I graduated.

WAND: [00:28:03] Oh, after you graduated. So in the summer of 2012.

SILVA: [00:28:09] Mm hmm.

WAND: [00:28:10] Okay. So did you request going to Indonesia?

SILVA: [00:28:16] I did not. So when I applied, it's different now. It changed in 2014, I believe is when they changed the application process. But when I applied, it was still them testing your resilience. So you decide. You can decide a region, but you couldn't decide a country. And you can choose preferences for sectors, but there's no guarantee for any of that. So the average time span for an application is still about 14 months before you would get accepted. So I submitted my application in June. No, July or August of 2012. And I left for Australia in August and worked at Opportunity National Australia there. And I was anticipating spending an entire year in Australia because of the average application time.

SILVA: [00:29:12] And in September I got my invitation to go to Peace Corps, so it was much faster than I had. It was an invitation, but we were leaving in April, so there was still a lot of time in between. But I stayed in Australia until February and then left to the States for about a month or two to finish my legal clearances and financial clearances and medical clearances. So I guess it's good that I got accepted so quickly, but still feel like I got cheated out of my time in Australia.

WAND: [00:29:49] You're still waiting to go back to Australia?

SILVA: [00:29:50] Still waiting to get back. Yeah.

WAND: [00:29:53] That sounds great. So you actually then got started in your training in April of 2013. So tell us about your training. Where was it and how many were you and what was it like to say goodbye to your family for, knowing you'd be gone for two years? Share that.

SILVA: [00:30:20] Well, actually, I wanted to go back to Indonesia for a second.

WAND: [00:30:23] Sure.

SILVA: [00:30:23] So I think the reason why they chose me for Indonesia, because before this I don't really know that the applicant, that they had an idea of where they wanted to send me. And when I was working at Opportunity National Australia, I worked with Indonesia, India, and the Philippines, and I think that actually helped them target for why they accelerated my application further. The Indonesia program was reopened in 2010, so we were accepted as early generation volunteers, which means that the program was still within its first three years and the country was still new. So it's almost like a pilot where we're pioneering the rest of the program. So when I got to Indonesia, we were the third group, the third batch that had been there since it opened.

SILVA: [00:31:15] So saying goodbye to my family, is that where we're at?

WAND: [00:31:18] Yes. But before, we just, just a bit about clarification about Peace Corps in Indonesia. Had Peace Corps been in Indonesia before and then left for a period of time?

SILVA: [00:31:29] The Peace Corps was in Indonesia until 1962 or '63, I believe. And then they were closed down.

WAND: [00:31:38] So then that means that they were only there for a couple of years.

SILVA: [00:31:41] Yes.

WAND: [00:31:41] Yeah. Peace Corps there in, from like 1962 maybe.

SILVA: [00:31:48] '61 or '62 to 63. Yeah.

WAND: [00:31:50] '63. I see. And then, then no longer there until.

SILVA: [00:31:55] 2010. Yeah.

WAND: [00:31:56] Yeah.

SILVA: [00:31:56] So it was a pretty big, pretty big opening I guess. And so I had anticipated going for a long time. My parents knew that I was going. It wasn't really like a big deal to anyone because at this point this is the third country that I'm leaving for within less than three years. And I think everyone just got used to saying goodbye to me and saying hello to me. So we didn't really do anything too big. There was no going away or, you know, big hurrah. I was back for a month. I, and then I was leaving again. I think if anything, I had done a lot of my bigger goodbyes before Australia. And even then it was just like some lunches here and there and etcetera. And now, um.

SILVA: [00:32:47] We did a road trip with my family. My dad rented an RV and we went down the East Coast to South Carolina. And then that was pretty much my last hurrah with my family. And then we came back up and they dropped me off at the airport and I left. And it was, we always cried at the airport. It's always sad. It's kind of like an overwhelming amount of sadness. You don't know like where it comes from. Um. And that was pretty much it, you know. And I got on the airplane to go to San Francisco. That's where we had our staging. And we were in San Francisco for two days and I met my cohort for the first time.

WAND: [00:33:34] And so in San Francisco you met each other and did a little bit of orientation?

SILVA: [00:33:40] Yeah. So we started, they call it, they call it staging. And what they do is they just like select like who's, here's the process, do some icebreaker activities. And put us into groups and things that it's easier to all leave together to the same, to Indonesia when we start our orientation. And so I, we had about four leaders, so I was a Peace Corps leader, which meant that I had to carry all of our passports. So everyone had different points of where they were in charge of the group. And I was in charge of us, or in charge of a portion of us, from when we left San Francisco until we got to Indonesia. And then there were some that were in charge for getting us onto the bus, just to make sure that we're all accountable for, accounted for.

WAND: [00:34:32] How many were you?

SILVA: [00:34:34] We were 51. And we left. Yeah. So we got, we all got there. We had our Peace Corps passports and I was probably hovering over everyone. And I think I, like, got up and checked to see where people were like all the time. Like, when we were getting off places. And some people had traveled before, others had not. Some appreciated it. Others felt like I was being a monitor.

WAND: [00:35:01] A bit too much oversight.

SILVA: [00:35:02] Yeah. So I take my role seriously.

WAND: [00:35:05] Yeah, really? You take on a commitment, you go for it.

SILVA: [00:35:09] Exactly. So, um. So that was that.

WAND: [00:35:11] And so where did you fly to then?

SILVA: [00:35:13] We flew into Surabaya and Surabaya is where our Peace Corps headquarters and so staff and everyone met us there and we went to a hotel that's kind of like near headquarters and was called like the Country Heritage Inn or Cottage or something like that. And we were there for a week. So during that week, they're kind of doing like introductory courses and deciding where are we going to go for our training group. So this is the time that staff gets to know us a little bit better as people and where are we in our languages and etcetera. And then after that week they tell us where we're going to be in our training villages. So it was, it was a nice, like, easing into the process.

SILVA: [00:36:04] And then after, after that week, we left for our training villages and we went to Batu, which is in Malang, also in East Java but a few hours away. So Batu and Malang. Batu is the area, Malang is the district. Had been, uh, we had a partnership with the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. So what Peace Corps did in Indonesia was they had a partnership with one of the universities there and they would serve as the training facility for us, like as the headquarters, HQ.

WAND: [00:36:37] So your group of 51 broke up then.

SILVA: [00:36:41] Mm hmm.

WAND: [00:36:41] And after the week in the capital and then dispersed.

SILVA: [00:36:46] We were dispersed along Batu, so all around Batu in different villages. And so we would each live with a different host family. But for each village there was about 5 to 7 of us depending on the group. So we would be within walking distance of each other and then we would have our morning trainings together at the *kepala desa*, which is the village, the head of the village's office. And that's where we would have our language class and with just six of us. And after we finished our language, in the afternoons after we had lunch, we would go to our technical trainings, which were we would convene three of our villages. So we had three villages that were in close proximity to each other. And we will all meet at one place to have our technical training together, which is where a Peace Corps staff would come and do trainings with us for TEFL or, mostly TEFL actually is when we'd do that.

WAND: [00:37:47] So and what was the language you were learning?

SILVA: [00:37:50] Bahasa Indonesia.

WAND: [00:37:51] Okay. Baha?

SILVA: [00:37:53] Bahasa.

WAND: [00:37:54] Bahasa. In Indonesia, is it?

SILVA: [00:37:58] Bahasa Indonesia, yeah. So that's the national language.

WAND: [00:38:02] Okay. And just a quick question about looking forward in terms of language, was, did that language, was that language used throughout the country so you didn't have to learn a second language or another?

SILVA: [00:38:18] Yeah, we did have to learn a second language, but it is used throughout the country, yeah.

WAND: [00:38:24] It's the kind of the common language.

SILVA: [00:38:25] The common language, yeah, and it's a newer national tongue. So even then, like, um, newer in the sense of because the country is still new and when they brought Bahasa Indonesian local dialects were still more commonly used. But you could get by, and anyone would understand when you were speaking in Bahasa Indonesia, it was just considered more formal. So, I don't want to like skip too far ahead.

WAND: [00:38:49] Yeah, yeah. Right, go ahead.

SILVA: [00:38:51] But.

WAND: [00:38:52] So the training in the, you, we left off where you did the technical training in the afternoon and the technical training included TEFL. So that would be Teaching English as a Foreign Language. And what other kinds of things were you trained during those afternoon sessions?

SILVA: [00:39:07] We were trained with, you know, understanding the Peace Corps goals, how to do our volunteer report form. So anything from goal and objective setting, how to do project management, when we want to do extracurricular activities. And we were also assigned, within each of our villages, we had to do a project, we had to do an activity for that was aiming towards our country, in-country goals, which is for English education. So we did an English camp with an elementary school in our village. And so we all just took on our roles within the six of us and we had like a superhero themed English camp and lots of, it was lots of fun. We had the entire day with the, with the school and kids ranging from like I think it was like second grade to fifth grade. And each of us took on a different team. So it was like, who's part of Miss Amanda's team and who's part of Miss Jenny's team or etcetera?

WAND: [00:40:10] Right.

SILVA: [00:40:11] And it was, it was a lot of fun.

WAND: [00:40:13] And you did that already in training to get yourselves oriented in and used to working in that mode so that when you were in your own communities, you could do the same kind of project.

SILVA: [00:40:25] Exactly. So we had to use that as an example, as an example for laying out the project. Pre-planning and monitoring and evaluation for afterwards as well. And how to then, that was our first example for how to input that into our volunteer report form. So our VRF is what we would have to submit to headquarters on a quarterly basis. So every time that we would have a training, we would have to submit our VRF and there would be incentives. You know, our first CD would bake us all cookies if we all submitted our VRFs or submitted our annual volunteer surveys and things like that. So it was, it was a good reason to do it, and I liked quantitative things like that. So it was fun for me. Um. So yeah.

SILVA: [00:41:11] So then after we would have our week. Once a week we would go to the university and then our entire cohort, all 51 of us, would all gather and see each other on Saturday, because Indonesia has a six day workweek. So on Saturdays we would all get together there and we would do more technical training. So more on safety and security measures. Other volunteers would come visit us as well and help us do trainings. So that was another thing, is that they integrated, like PCVs that were already in a year in or two years in into our trainings consistently for technical training and for, uh, at the university. So we were getting exposure to other volunteers.

SILVA: [00:42:00] And then in the middle of our training, within those three months, we were assigned. I think it was like we stayed with someone for three days and we visited a Peace Corps volunteer at their site with, either by ourselves or with another volunteer, with another trainee. And we got to see like, what is your school environment like and what is their host situation like? And it gave us a better idea of what we wanted. And when we met with our regional managers and did our kind of our assessments and things, we would have interviews and they would see where you were

with your language skills and how are you doing with this and that. And then the team, the regional staff, the Peace Corps staff would decide, you know, where we matched up based off of our needs and what needs the schools had.

SILVA: [00:42:51] So it was, I thought they did a great job with where they had placed me. So after the, I think it was like two and a half months or so into it, we finally, they finally decided we were going to go. And they drew out a map on the, in the university campus and we had to go. And when they gave us our spot, we would stand on where we were on the, on the island of Java.

WAND: [00:43:15] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:43:15] So our cohort was the first one to be in West Java. So there was, there was a chance that you would be in East Java or West Java. So it was a new obstacle for Peace Corps Indonesia in the sense that this was the first one they were going to be dealing in a region that was far away from HQ. And to manage, we were at that time the largest, the largest group. So it was all an experiment as well for them.

SILVA: [00:43:42] So we were the first 20 to be placed in West Java. I was selected for the first 20 and I was in, um. And then there, the rest of the other 31 were in East Java. So they had per district probably more volunteers, a ratio of them, and they were at that point since it was three years and there was more familiarity, a little bit more with Peace Corps. So they had, they had a chance of like, you know, maybe like two villages or 4 hours away or maybe like two years ago, their village might have had an experience with a Peace Corps volunteer, whereas for us in West Java, we were going in and they had never heard of Peace Corps. It was, we're working with a different provincial government, different education system. So the, they're separated by. East Java and West are different provinces. So we're working with a different education system when we go into that province and we're working with different ethnic groups.

SILVA: [00:44:38] So this is when they separated us into West Java and East Java, so we would have dialect classes, language classes for our, for our

local dialects. And, um, I was in a very unique region where we learned Bahasa Cirebon, which means that in this dialect is only spoken in two of the districts of West Java whereas everywhere else they speak Sundanese, which is an ethnic language. And Sundanese are ethnically different from Javanese. But in Cirebon and Indramayu for some reason, because they're also big port cities, they have a combination of both Sundanese and Javanese individuals, and they've kind of formed this language that is similar to Java, but has like accents and mannerisms of Sunda. That's the best way that I can explain it.

SILVA: [00:45:36] And so Javanese, to give an example, they're very polite. Extremely, extremely polite and kind. And all throughout Indonesia they're known as being kind, but it's just a very like formal, very formal way of speaking in Java. And you would never like make a joke and laugh at anything crass, you know. In Sunda, they're much more like laid back and they like to like loud laugh, like laugh loudly, and are much more about like kidding around and things like that. And you could see that. And in my area, because we have a lot of people that are going in and out from Jakarta. So we are on the main strip, the main. I was, I was further inland. But because we're off of Jalan Pantura, which is the main road where that goes all across Java to Jakarta, we're getting a lot of people that are, that are in transit.

SILVA: [00:46:34] So because of that, people have some of this urban edge to them a little bit. And that means that, you know, they're much more easy about kidding around. They're not afraid to like, they don't have to always be so formal. You know, it's not a big deal if you're not wearing your hijab when it's, in for them, it was like wearing your hijab is a personal thing and then also a professional thing. So if you're teaching, if you're at work, you would wear your hijab as a professional courtesy, almost like a, like that. But then if you're at home, they would be wearing like their pajamas or their shorts and it wouldn't really matter. And if they, if they wore their hijab at home, it would be more of a personal thing versus a, versus a professional thing. So it was, it was a first religious event.

WAND: [00:47:19] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:47:19] So it was really interesting. I really loved where I was placed. I was placed in a district of Indramayu. And Indramayu is in the northern, northeast quadrant of the west, of West Java. So right on the, right on the corner of Central Java a little bit. And it was very, very hot where we were. And we were known for mangoes. And I was in a 99 percent agricultural area. We were, I would have to ride my bike about 2 hours to get to the main road before I could take a bus or anything else, anywhere else to get to the train station or to get to a city or anywhere.

WAND: [00:48:04] So when you, after you rode your bike that far, where did you leave your bike when you got on public transportation?

SILVA: [00:48:10] It's called a *penitipan* and it's like a place where people leave their motorcycles or.

WAND: [00:48:15] And they were secure?

SILVA: [00:48:16] Yeah, I knew the guy well at that point. So they always like helped me around and helped guide me the first time. But when we, when we, when we first get in, you know, I was really lucky. So I didn't, I honestly have no idea what I'm doing when I get there. We were brought in by our, um. So we all went to West Java from, we left after that. And so we're leaving our training villages in East Java. We take this 24 hour train ride to get to West Java. Now we're in Bandung, which is one of the capital cities in West Java. And we have a few days where we are now going to meet our schools and counterparts for the first time. So then Peace Corps did some trainings with our principals and I, my principal was at a different conference so he couldn't pick me up. So I had one of the head English teachers come to pick me up and she was one of the senior teachers there.

SILVA: [00:49:15] And we hit it off. She was great, you know, got along really well, seemed like a fantastic leader and everything. And then they, they dropped me. They like drove us. We drove back to our village and then dropped me off at my house that night. And I met my host family for the first time. My host mom is, uh, she was a principal at an elementary school and it was her second marriage. So my, uh, my host father had lived in

Korea for a little bit, worked there for a few years, five years or more, and then came back to Indonesia. And they got married, her second marriage, and they had a daughter together and had a wonderful house, really great, uh, that my host father had taken a lot of ownership over me because I was also an outsider kind of coming into this family I think for him is how he felt. And he would teach me like where to go and how to like so really like walked me through everything. So it was a great first family to stay with.

WAND: [00:50:21] So in what language were you communicating?

SILVA: [00:50:25] I spoke in Bahasa the whole time. They mainly spoke in Bahasa Indramayu, but they. I would like slowly pick things up and then later on like it would, we would like go off between the two, but mostly in Bahasa Indonesia.

WAND: [00:50:43] Right. And did you feel pretty comfortable in the language by that time or where we you still pretty much?

SILVA: [00:50:52] Uh, yeah. So they required us to be at a minimum of intermediate when we left our language training. I was intermediate high when I left language training. So I was, I was pretty good in my language. I felt, I felt pretty comfortable in speaking. And then, so my host father used to like, he would first, the first time I had to leave, he drove me to Jalan Pantura, to the main road, so I didn't have to ride my bike the entire way. And then from there, he, like, showed me which bus to take and he would, like, draw me maps and show me, like, which way to go and this and that. And I would like follow these maps really well. And then the next time he would say, okay, now you're going to ride your bike. So I would ride my bike for the first time. And then he was like, this is who you're going to like leave your bike with.

SILVA: [00:51:46] And so he always, like, walked me through the steps. It's like a kid going to school for the first time. You know, like you're walking them to the bus stop and this and that. And except I'm like going much farther distances. But so I started to, like, slowly learn my way around. And, um.

WAND: [00:52:02] Who provided you the bicycle?

SILVA: [00:52:04] Oh, so Peace Corps provides a stipend to buy our bikes. So we had, I think it was like 1 million rupiah, which is like \$100, to buy a bike. And, um.

WAND: [00:52:15] And did your host family help you find the bike?

SILVA: [00:52:17] Yes. So it was, uh, I think actually my school went with me to help get the bike. So yeah. So it was between my school and my host family and it wasn't really clear whose role was what. So I think between them they had decided, okay, you do this, I'll do this, you do this, I'll do this.

WAND: [00:52:36] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:52:36] And they were pretty much in constant communication. So I had a nice transition in and it worked out really well. I loved my school, my principal was great. And I got some, got like met halfway in the road. So we had, after the first three months you go to your in-service training, we call it IST. And at IST we, um, first time that we're all seeing each other again, the entire 51 of us. And.

WAND: [00:53:06] And that was after three months?

SILVA: [00:53:07] Yeah. So six months all together in country, three months at site. And I remember speaking to other volunteers and I was going to stay with my host family. But then I realized that I, I started like to break down a little bit and realized that it wasn't the best place for me. The counterpart that I told you about, the senior teacher, was actually manipulating my household situation to tell them, like, different things and almost like a power play in a sense. So she, when we would go meet with officials, she would be behind, when she was just with me, she'd say, like, Amanda, you're so intelligent, Amanda, you know, in language so well, she's the smartest person in her cohort, this and that, blah, blah, blah. And like, we're so lucky to have her.

SILVA: [00:53:53] Then we would go meet with someone that was important in the village to introduce them to me. And she would say, she doesn't know how to speak Indonesian yet. Please communicate with me so that she understands what you're saying. And then behind my back she would go and tell my host family like, she's not allowed to go anywhere unless she asks for my permission first. And it was this thing where our group was going to Bali and I had like said, oh, like by the way, I'm just letting you know like I'm going to Bali for during this vacation time or whatever. And the only person that has to approve it is my principal, to just say like just like you would ask for time off at a normal job. And my principal is my direct head, so he has to sign off on my papers to go elsewhere. My parents, like my host parents like thought that I was being deceptive and because they were told otherwise and I didn't know any of this stuff.

SILVA: [00:54:47] So it was a very like manipulative situation. And I'm very smart and I wasn't going to, I understood what she was doing and I kind of just like let it go for a little bit. But then it became kind of toxic at a point where my host mother was being passive aggressive towards me and like, you know, they were saying things that weren't always very nice, but in a way that was just like. Like, oh, maybe if you, like I would clean up, but they're not home or they're sleeping. And then they would say, well, maybe if you swept your room every day like you would notice. And I was like, no, like, what are you talking about? I sweep my room every day. You're just not seeing it. So it was a lot of, um, it was a lot of little things like that that were starting to build up slowly.

SILVA: [00:55:30] And I thought that I was going to get more opportunities to do more work and things like that, and work with my, with my, with my school, my host mom's school. And it was, it just wasn't really happening that way. So I made the decision to, to move to a different host family. And I started searching for host families to stay with.

WAND: [00:55:52] And this was now six, or three months into the community?

SILVA: [00:55:57] Mm hmm. Three months into the community. And I started visiting with other families and stuff and looking for an opportunity that would allow me a little bit more independence. And also a little bit more of

like a humble situation. So where my money is actually helping the family because we, we do pay them a stipend.

WAND: [00:56:15] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:56:17] So I, I remember visiting with the family, the first person that I visited with. And she was a single, a single mom, or she was a grandma and she was living by herself and she could really use the money. She was a tailor. And the house could use some work, but you know like it probably wasn't the best, the safest living situation. But I remember visiting with her and I had like the idea of living there. And then left and my bike broke in the middle of the night. So I was like riding, it's pitch dark outside. And it's like 7:00.

WAND: [00:56:55] Yeah.

SILVA: [00:56:55] But like it's pitch dark.

WAND: [00:56:57] Right, right.

SILVA: [00:56:57] And I am on like a gravel road and it's like really bumpy. So, and out of nowhere, my tire wheel just, like, spins out of control, and I'm like, on the ground. So I walk back with everything just.

WAND: [00:57:10] In parts.

SILVA: [00:57:10] Like tangled up. Yeah. And I'm just like, my bike broke. And my host father was not surprised, which was really, like, shocking to me. So then after that, like, I called Peace Corps, I called my safety and security manager, and I was like, listen, I think they broke my bike.

WAND: [00:57:30] Hmm.

SILVA: [00:57:30] And I'm like, because I had just put, I'd just put air in my tires.

WAND: [00:57:35] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [00:57:35] And because my host father was used to taking care of me, he said something like, oh, you probably didn't put air in your tires. And that's why it, that's why it blew up. And I was like, that's not true. I just put air in my tires. So he was making this insinuation that I don't take care of my bike. And the next morning my bike was fixed up and brand new and they were like, look, what are you going to do without your host family to take care of you like this? And, um, it was just a very like twisted situation. But I understood.

WAND: [00:58:05] It felt staged.

SILVA: [00:58:06] It was very staged. And I understood where they were coming from because they were trying to show an example of like, um, I got it. I understood. Because I had been in Sri Lanka before and I, and I know these types of cultures and so I know that it wasn't coming from a malicious perspective, but it also wasn't a safe place at that point because the intentions were misperceived or misplaced.

SILVA: [00:58:33] And I made a decision to move in with a younger family. They were a young couple in their in their thirties and had a daughter who lived in the capital city with their grandparents. And it was a teacher at my school. And they are so fantastic, so humble, and also just always working too. So they kind of like, we have the same work ethic and styles of living and so it served them well. And I. So the same teacher actually tried to manipulate that situation and she told, she started spreading rumors around about the school in the community that I was dirty and things like that. And in Islam that's a very like negative thing to say to someone, to say that they're dirty, because cleanliness is close to godliness there. You know, you're washing yourself five times a day. So it's, it was like a huge thing. Huge thing.

SILVA: [00:59:31] And I didn't find out until much later on, but I was, I was so like blessed to have this family because they do not, you know, they're not easily motivated. They knew her for a long time. She's been their neighbor for a while. And, you know, so they just, like, understood her character and knew the history and they said, like, we're not, we don't need to believe what other people say. Let's, let's give her a chance. I think she's a

good person. And at that point, because I had the freedom to go to school and do other activities and meet with other people. I wasn't constricted to staying inside my house after 5:00 p.m.

WAND: [01:00:11] Which is what the other, the first hosts wanted?

SILVA: [01:00:13] Yeah, host family did, to protect me. And because I'm a single woman and I'm in this country. I'm not married.

WAND: [01:00:19] That was the intention that they spoke?

SILVA: [01:00:22] Right. And so this family, they, I was able to just like do my own thing. They were gone on the weekend to go to the capital city to visit their daughter, who's seven and deaf, and so they're, her. The wife's parents live in Indramayu Kota, which is the capital city of Indramayu. Not really a huge city, but the capital city nonetheless, where the universities are and everything. And, um, they, they would go visit there so they could be with their parents and be with the daughter, and they're originally from there. So it made sense to them. And but they work in my village. So we, so I would have the house to myself and I would have time to clean up and go and do other activities and meet with people. And I would, um, slowly like made a lot of friends, you know, I.

SILVA: [01:01:13] That same time I, the same time that my bike broke actually I used to have. I had to walk to school for the first time and normally on my bike rides there would be like a, there's a hardware store. And the hardware store, the, the guys that worked there would always call out in the morning like, good morning, boo. And then like, or hi boo, bye boo, right, when I leave at 3:00 from school. And they would always like go back and forth between this. And then this time because I'm walking, you know, I'm not like speeding past them, they're like, they're like, stop, talk to us for a while. So they asked me like what religion I am. And I'm like, oh, like I'm Catholic. And then they said, oh, the family that owns this store is also Catholic. And they invited me to go to church.

SILVA: [01:01:57] So I met, um, after eight months in Indonesia, I met my first like Christian or Catholic family and it was, it was awesome. I went to church

with them the next Sunday and got to meet other people in a different area. And they were from Kalimantan, which is another island. So they were Chinese Kalimantan and had, had like become business people in, in Java more recently and had become successful. And their, all their family members were all like managing different stores. So, um, it was, it was nice to, to meet them and make new friends and otherwise. And so now I had like people that I could also go to, and they became some of my closest like friends throughout my service, the people that worked at the hardware store as well as the owners of the hardware store.

SILVA: [01:02:54] And I, um, started doing more extracurricular activities. That same time, my principal actually retired from my school. So now there was a different power dynamic at school. So we got a new principal who was a woman and in her forties and she came from a different city. She came from the capital city, which means that she didn't really have much leverage in terms of power in our village. She didn't really understand like what that meant. And that put her at a disadvantage because the senior English teacher was now able to manipulate other circumstances there as well.

WAND: [01:03:33] And she wasn't known, the new principal didn't know her tactics.

SILVA: [01:03:37] No, no. So my principal kind of, she obviously sees through these things. But she apologized to me later on because there was a time when she was almost manipulated as well by her. And the same time that this was all happening, and now I've been working with four different English counterparts. The senior English teacher I didn't really work with. I didn't work with her at all because she taught 12th grade. I taught 10th and 11th grade. So I had four other counterparts that I taught with all the time. And now all, all of them were no longer working with me because we had a new teacher come in who is a civil servant, and a civil servant is required to have like X amount of teaching hours, which means that she now alone teaches all of 10th and 11th grade. So all the other teachers that I worked with were, you know, of their own utility. They were private teachers. They weren't civil servants. They weren't government teachers.

WAND: [01:04:37] Right.

SILVA: [01:04:37] So because she's a government teacher, she's assigned to that school. The school doesn't pay her, but the government pays her. But because of that, she is required to teach X amount of hours. So it's better for the school, but worse for the teachers that are, that are losing their hours. So now there's like a lot of.

WAND: [01:04:52] Tension.

SILVA: [01:04:52] A lot of tension, because the senior teacher did not pass her civil servant exam. She left Hajj, she went to Hajj and she left Hajj early. So she didn't actually get the blessings from Hajj to bribe her way into the civil servant test and didn't pass. And it's like all this karma is coming back at her. But she took a lot of this frustration out on this new teacher now. So she moved her target from me to her. And on top of that, all these other, all my other counterparts were also now jealous, you know, and they're like, this new teacher is coming in. She's taking our classes, she's taking our students. And now the, the other teachers had to divide all 12th grade classes. So it's, you know, a lot of different things that are happening.

WAND: [01:05:42] So what were you doing now at this point?

SILVA: [01:05:44] I was teaching with the new counterpart.

WAND: [01:05:47] So and what does that mean when you said you were teaching with the new counterpart? Were you co-teaching in the classroom or were you taking some classes and she was taking other classes?

SILVA: [01:05:56] We co-taught. Sorry. So we, um, we. It's the, the model in Indonesia for English education is done by, with co-teaching standards. So we are always supposed to be teaching with a teacher in the room so that there's sustainability after we leave. So grading assessments, everything is done together. We had a great, we had a great working relationship. Um, she. I would go and like she would teach the first start of the class where like, you know, you're teaching kind of like more of the

grammatical stuff. And she had, they have like great ways of teaching the grammar and with, in their Indonesian like nuances that I didn't really have before. And then I would take over when it comes to games and we would do like more of the exercises and stuff and I would come up with a creative way for us to do that.

SILVA: [01:06:48] And then we would, we would switch for the next class and we would go off again. And then if there was a subject that she didn't know, then I would prepare a lesson plan and then I would do it the first class, and then she would copy it the second class. And.

WAND: [01:07:02] So. So how did you find that, that approach? Did you find that helpful? And did you learn a lot from the teachers and did you feel like they were learning from you?

SILVA: [01:07:15] Yes. Um, so my. I don't know why, but like I think at some point in your service, you either get a really crappy counterpart or you get a really great counterpart. And I think in our cohort, volunteers are deciding, do I focus on the teachers? Do I focus on, is my sustainability with the teacher? Is my sustainability with the class? Do I leave my legacy with my community? And people would kind of like pick and choose, where is my, where does my passion lie with that?

WAND: [01:07:44] You're talking about volunteers sort of seem to make, seem to come in to those choices, whether they consciously or not.

SILVA: [01:07:51] Exactly. And mine ended up being with my counterpart and with my students. So I felt this accountability that even if there wasn't another English teacher there, I would go and teach their class. Even if it was by myself. And then if. Because my counterpart was great. So as long as we both agreed that as long as there's a teacher in the classroom for. So if there was another class that didn't have a teacher in there, I would go and substitute that class while my counterpart.

WAND: [01:08:20] Taught yours.

SILVA: [01:08:20] Taught our regular classes.

WAND: [01:08:21] Yeah, yeah.

SILVA: [01:08:22] And then, um, and so I just became like a regular teacher sometimes. But if we had all our classes together, then we would teach them together. And, um, it was a great setup. You know, we learned both from each other. I set up a grading analysis system based off of how the students would learn. So we did like a teaching styles, looked at how the how the students are learning, have them do some assessments on their own learning method style, like learning styles. And then we would arrange our lesson plans to go along with how they learned. And we had arranged like attendance, homework, and like how they do in their activities, what is their participation, and all different kinds of levels of how they would be, how they were contributing to their overall grades. And the, they had. How did we do this?

SILVA: [01:09:15] I prepared like all their different homeworks and everything. So every single homework that they had led up to their final exam. So if they had actually done all their homework, there's no way they wouldn't pass their final exam. So we had hours where we were like all of my students passed except for some of my automotive students. And then I would go and say like, you know, we're going to learn to get, we're going to, we're going to learn this together. And I would sit down with them and figure it out. And then they would do another practice test or whatever it is, the final, and they would pass.

SILVA: [01:09:46] But it got to a point where some of the teachers, it's a very like relaxed setting. So sometimes teachers just wouldn't show up, and there was no accountability to anyone. And I would get so frustrated by this because, like, why am I sacrificing two years to like help this school or to help my students if no one's taking this seriously? And I just felt like there needs to be more like, and I think it's because we go in with so much passion and we want to help so much. So it makes us feel like, like it, does no one care?

SILVA: [01:10:23] So I remember like the one, one of the first times actually I was substituting a 12th grade class, 12th grade automotive, and they didn't

know that I was substituting them because the senior teacher, I was taking over her class and she was on Hajj. So they were used to just like skipping her class altogether. And I go in and there's ten students out of 41 in my class and I'm like, okay, I'm going to give them some time. And I did the lesson with a few of them, and then after that had someone else sit in and I went to go look for these students. And I go to the back of the school and I see all 30 of them playing soccer, football, and they're barefoot. The water, the power is out, the electricity is out, which means the water is not working in and the bells don't go off. So they don't actually know when their periods are. And so because the water is off they can't wash their feet after playing football, so they have to stand out in the hallway.

SILVA: [01:11:22] So first I see them all playing soccer and I get to the field. I hunched back, like hunched down, you know, into a squat, getting ready to chase them all into the classroom. And they all see me getting ready and they all like scream and they're like, Miss Amanda! And just run. They book it behind the school, behind the rice patties, straight to their class. They all line up and I was like, you wasted 45 minutes of my time. You're going to stay with me after the bell for 45 minutes and finish this lesson outside. So they got into their groups, all 30 of them lined up outside their classroom because they can't go in because they haven't washed their feet. And are doing the lesson now, and no one has ever been late. So they watched their other ten, you know, peers leave.

WAND: [01:12:05] Leave on time.

SILVA: [01:12:07] Leave on time, having finished the exercises. And yeah, so after that, no one has ever been late for my classes. And it's, um, it was great. You know, I had a reputation for, for being accountable to them. And I'm glad that I was able to do that for my, for my students.

WAND: [01:12:24] So, uh, when did your, the second counterpart, the one that you could work with, when did she arrive? And was it during the first year you were in the community?

SILVA: [01:12:35] Mm hmm. It was after the first semester.

WAND: [01:12:37] After the first semester. So you were still in your first year. So you got a chance to work with her for a year and a half.

SILVA: [01:12:42] Yes.

WAND: [01:12:42] Or something like that. Wonderful. So you were able to really bond and contribute to one another's lives?

SILVA: [01:12:49] Yeah. And it was her first time teaching high school as well. So we both kind of started off together in a sense. New principal, you know, new school. And it was nice. It was nice to have like someone that could, that was really willing to work with me, you know?

WAND: [01:13:04] So and all of that happened at about the same time, that you got your new host family?

SILVA: [01:13:10] Mm hmm.

WAND: [01:13:10] As well. So it just.

SILVA: [01:13:12] And found a church. So it was like all this.

WAND: [01:13:14] Oh yes, right.

SILVA: [01:13:15] It was right after. I have to say that like once I started going to church again, I started, I embraced this mentality of just saying yes to everything. So if someone said [speaks Indonesian] means like come visit me or something.

WAND: [01:13:31] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [01:13:32] So normally I'm just like, oh no, I have to go home. Oh, I have to go. And I would make an excuse or something because I would always have to be home at a certain time. And now I didn't really have those restrictions anymore. So I just like said, yeah, of course I'm going to visit with you. So my commutes home would normally be a 15 minute bike ride

and now they ended up being like 3 hours long because I ended up stopping and talking with people for an hour every way. And if I didn't stop to talk with them, you know, I would be, it would be rude. So we ended up, that's, my Indonesian got so great because I always had, I was talking about so many different topics all the time.

SILVA: [01:14:07] And because of that, like no one, she wasn't, my senior teacher wasn't able to manipulate me and nothing really got through because the community knew me so well. They were like, Miss Amanda talks with everybody. She doesn't think that she's above anyone. And this is other people saying this to me. They said like, she would never do anything like that and da da da da. And like people were defending me because they really understood. And after the two years, you know, I think in the beginning, people were really confused, like, why would she leave such a great affluent family? And they have, you know, they have really good living circumstances and she has a maid and blah, blah, blah. And so they're thinking like, why would she leave a place where she, where she has someone to cook for her and this and that. I wanted to cook for myself.

SILVA: [01:14:52] So I moved to this family, you know, they need the money that I'm giving them. They live very humbly and they're also mahatma teachers. So mahatma is *maju sehat bersama*, which stands for let's get healthy together or enter health together. And it's kind of like a spiritual martial arts, similar somewhere between like tai chi and yoga and, and martial arts all combined. And, uh, it's only in in Malaysia and Indonesia and it has all the feelings of Islam so. Go ahead.

WAND: [01:15:25] I have heard of this word and I didn't know quite what it was. So thank you for explaining it.

SILVA: [01:15:32] Yeah, of course. Yeah. And so my host family, they are coaches in this. Their entire family does mahatma.

WAND: [01:15:41] This is your new family?

SILVA: [01:15:42] My new family.

WAND: [01:15:43] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [01:15:44] So I would go with them to exercises, to practices and stuff. And then I. My host father, this is the father-father of the entire family, our patriarch. He was just so proud of me. He like, he opened up so many different opportunities for me because he worked at the university and was always willing to help me. So he would like introduce me to other professors and then he would introduce. He let me host my first meeting information session at the university so that we could find people that were interested in hosting in Girls Leading Our World camp and Boys Respecting Others camp. So we, we called it I Glow, I Bro. Indonesian girls leading our world, Indonesian boys respecting others. So everything just completely transformed in my service after I started saying yes and everyone started welcoming me and it was just absolutely beautiful. And I think it just led to having the strongest connections, you know. And, um.

WAND: [01:16:46] So the GLOW camps then were camps that were really, in a sense, could be considered your second project or your secondary project.

SILVA: [01:16:56] Mm hmm, yeah, which was youth development.

WAND: [01:16:57] Yeah. Yeah, right. Good. So, uh, when we, uh. I'm just looking a little at the time here. But the GLOW camps, when did you, uh, when were you able to schedule those?

SILVA: [01:17:14] Um, so.

WAND: [01:17:15] At the end of your first year were you able, was it already or?

SILVA: [01:17:18] When did I do? Okay, so for the longest time I was waiting on the other volunteers in my district. There's, um, four, four of us that were close to each other. Two of us were in the same district, but 5 hours away from each other. The other two that were closest to us were in the neighboring district, and they were probably in equivalent like 6 hours another way. And we were going to do something together, but no one

was really like getting in touch with me again. So I just. I had dengue in February and after I had dengue, I kind of came back and I was no longer very passive.

SILVA: [01:18:05] You know, my, I had, even though I had moved to a new home, I still didn't have proper furniture. I didn't have a mosquito net put up yet. I didn't have a table or anywhere to put my clothes. I just wore my same like five outfits from my school year and then my pajamas and I left everything else under my bed in my suitcase. And that was pretty much it. And I didn't ask my school for anything. And because I knew they were still struggling to pay teachers. And after I had dengue, I just kind of came back and I was like, I can't do this. I can't just wait. So I got paint and I painted my room and then I hung up my mosquito net with the help of my family, because you had to now that I had dengue.

SILVA: [01:18:50] And then I had, uh, what was it? Oh, yeah. I asked my school for a closet finally. And a desk. And I already had a desk but they finally gave me a closet. And now I was able to, like, put my clothes and things.

WAND: [01:19:07] Hang your clothes up.

SILVA: [01:19:08] My clothes, yeah, and have places to put my things. Just little, little things.

WAND: [01:19:12] That made you feel better.

SILVA: [01:19:13] Yeah. And finally started to like settle in and I also decided like, I can't wait on these other volunteers anymore. I have to start. So I got together. So after this yes period that I was going through, I was visiting schools and visiting universities and doing trainings with teachers and doing speaking with different students. And at the end of my service, I had accumulated, I think, over 126 pages of activities that I have done. So I had visited with so many different schools and done so many different trainings at that point. And, um, and it was because it was difficult to work at my school, because my counterparts, all the five of them, aside from my new one were not willing to work with me as much to do other, to do other trainings and things. So I was always halted in some sense outside of my

teaching environment. So, so I just did my regular English club and I did my dance club. And outside of both of these things I went and visited with all other schools that wanted me to be there, that invited me to be there.

WAND: [01:20:20] And when you go to those other schools were you teaching in those situations or doing workshops or what were you doing when you would go visit? Were you working just with the other teachers or were you working with other students?

SILVA: [01:20:34] It was kind of like a day to visit. And then we did workshops with the students so they would choose. The English teachers would bring all the students in for like an assembly or have like maybe I would go visit with the class and do some fun exercises or talk about my experience. It depended on what the teacher wanted to do. Sometimes the teachers would have a lot of questions. But I would spend like a full, a full day at that school, probably a few hours with each class. And then, uh, and then talk with the teachers and.

WAND: [01:21:05] So would you, would they ask you to talk about your life in the United States?

SILVA: [01:21:11] Mm hmm.

WAND: [01:21:11] So it would be more like a kind of a cross-cultural experience with you representing the U.S.?

SILVA: [01:21:16] Yeah, it's like, yeah, both cross cultural and then also like some co-teaching depending on what it was. So we would play some games. I would do, I did a lot of leadership exercises with English, so I would have them do some, do some games. If they were higher level, then it would be more like a personality type of thing where they would have to learn something about themselves or the person around, like team building activities and things. And that was fun. That was a lot of fun.

WAND: [01:21:49] Right. So, um, so now we've, we've covered a lot of things. Just one, we sort of lost track of the GLOW camp. When, when were you able to actually facilitate one or more of those?

SILVA: [01:22:09] Um, so because we were the first group in West Java, no one had ever done this before. And no one ever heard of this before. And we're strangers coming into an area, and I can't just say this is what should happen. So at that point, because I worked at so many different schools, I had gotten 30 Indonesians to work with me on this committee. And we did the first GLOW BRO, first, first a boys camp with a girls camp. So before that, boys camps weren't popular. We decided as a committee that we needed one, both girls and boys. And then we had it for the entire district. So normally these camps would be for one school where the volunteer was. I didn't have that, as I mentioned before, but I had plenty of connections everywhere else, so I chose to host it in my village. It was in a neighboring, neighboring village, I guess, in my area.

SILVA: [01:23:04] And I knew the owners of the campsite very well. They, I called them like mom and dad and they are like leaders of scouts. So they're used to like hosting these types of events and stuff. And our committee of 30 were spread out. So we had three areas within our district and then we would reach out to, we had 13 schools that were involved in the selection process and then we did an information session at all 13 schools. We had students apply, so we had about, depending on the area, we would, we had about 300 students from each area apply for ten spots. So ten girls and ten boys from each region, from each of these three areas, were selected. And the 60 of them came together, which is amazing because they don't normally do that. They're normally very used to being with people that they know from their school and their class. So now they're meeting with, and there was like a lot of respect, you know, they felt like, wow, I've been selected.

WAND: [01:24:11] Out of a big group.

SILVA: [01:24:11] Out of a really big group, you know, I'm. So they have a lot of sense of pride and they felt like they were the real leaders of their groups. So we had a wonderful committee and we set up this program and it took us about a year to get off the ground. And finally did the camp in October 2014. So.

WAND: [01:24:35] So that was about it sounds like, what, maybe about five months before you left the service? Because you went in in April.

SILVA: [01:24:45] I went in in April.

WAND: [01:24:47] So this would have been the preceding.

SILVA: [01:24:49] It was the preceding year. So, yeah. So yeah, pretty much it was, it was right before I ended. So it was like six or.

WAND: [01:24:55] Six months or so before you ended, but so you had a chance to, to facilitate one of these. So speaking of when you were ready to, to leave, what, did other volunteers or another volunteer replace you in your village?

SILVA: [01:25:15] No.

WAND: [01:25:16] No.

SILVA: [01:25:16] So we did the first one and then I helped prepare my village for the second one, not my village, but the committee. They chose a new person to lead that. And they, my, the camps have been happening, Indonesian led, for four years now.

WAND: [01:25:33] And in East Java?

SILVA: [01:25:34] In West Java, where, in my area.

WAND: [01:25:37] Oh, for now they've been, they've been Indonesian led for the four years.

SILVA: [01:25:40] Yeah, since my first year.

WAND: [01:25:42] Ah, wonderful.

SILVA: [01:25:42] So it's great legacy there. The other camps happened, so I had a bunch of volunteers visit me for my camp and then after that they started

their camps. And so we were able to visit like with other different regions that were doing it. And they, they have. They have stayed with the model of having it sustainable within volunteers. So they'll pass it on like, okay, this volunteer worked on this, I'm going to pass it on to the next cohort of volunteers coming in. And we. What did you ask me that was in relation to that?

WAND: [01:26:19] Well, whether the, uh, this was.

SILVA: [01:26:21] Oh, whether it was someone that.

WAND: [01:26:22] Whether you were replaced by another volunteer.

SILVA: [01:26:25] So they, we got two more volunteers in my district, but not in my village. I told them that there shouldn't be another person in my village and I think it's also because they didn't need to be another person in my village. My counterpart was doing great on her own and it's also my site was so remote, it would have been difficult, I think, for anyone else to be there because it wasn't very accessible and didn't meet a lot of the safety and security standards if there was an emergency. Um, so, and that actually ended up happening for a lot of individuals that came to our district that had much better sites than I did. But they had difficulty with the culture. And because it was such a unique culture. And I mentioned that before because it's a, it's like, it's crass, but it's funny and like things like that. So I embraced that and I think a lot of other people might have seen it as like harassment or and otherwise.

WAND: [01:27:27] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [01:27:27] So and because I was everywhere around my area, people knew of me. So I think that becomes really difficult to be compared to another volunteer. And I didn't really want, I would never want to live under someone else's shadow. And it's much easier when you're a new person in a new place. So I preferred, I told, I told them that I didn't recommend someone else at my site for that reason, because you would be continuously compared to and it's a horrible service to live under. And I think that happened to a few volunteers that had to take it over. So.

WAND: [01:28:05] Um, okay. Just a few more questions here. During the two years that you were in Indonesia as a volunteer, did you do any traveling away from your site or even away from the country? You know, during your break, I know volunteers usually get a few weeks in the middle to take a little break. So what did you do during your break?

SILVA: [01:28:32] Um, I made a decision in my service that I did Peace Corps to be about my community. So I mainly saw other volunteers probably every 4 to 6 months. And I traveled all throughout Java to a lot of volunteer sites. I did a lot of trainings with other volunteers. And so I'd say that I know like that very well. There was also an island, a remote island, about 4 hours away from, 4 hours by boat away from the coast to where I was. And there's only 30 people on this island at a time. It's called Pulau Biawak, which means the island of lizards. And there's like five foot monitor lizards that just roam the island. And, you know, will be next to me when I'm taking a shower, things like that. And so it was really, really awesome experience. You know, we went spear fishing. And had. There is no electricity on the island after a certain hour so.

WAND: [01:29:32] You mean, you're talking about the island where the lizards are?

SILVA: [01:29:37] Yeah, the island where the lizards are. Yeah. So it was, uh, you spend like two days there and I went with two of the teachers that are hospitality teachers at my school. They teach, I worked at a vocational high school, so the majors were automotive, multimedia, and hospitality. So the two hospitality teachers and then a few other friends, like it was a group of five of us. We took this boat and we got lost in the middle of the ocean, in the middle of a rainstorm. So it ended up taking us 7 hours and we're all like sleeping in the rain and not really covered. And it was fun and scary. Um. So.

SILVA: [01:30:17] And then we, I went to Bali at the end of my service and the beginning of my service. I was lucky enough to go to Jogja and a few other places. So my first Christmas I spent at a volunteer site. We spent New Year's with our family. And then my second Christmas I went to East

Java with a volunteer that's very close to me. And we went and hung out at her site and then visited areas that she lived in. And she lived where like surfing is very common and the beaches are really nice. So it wasn't very far away from where she was. And so we were able to go and stay there and with a bunch of other volunteers and had a really lovely Christmas.

SILVA: [01:31:02] And then she came with me to my site. So we traveled across Java and went to my site and she was able to see like where I lived. And I'd only had three people ever visit my site in my service. So it was really meaningful to me because no one ever makes the trek to come see me. So she came and visited my site. We like, you know, she met my family. And it was just nice to like, you have a better understanding of how other volunteers are living and what their living styles are like and how. It's so amazing to see like how it's so perfect for them, like how that experience is unique to how they live.

SILVA: [01:31:39] And then we went to Jakarta and we spent New Year's at a hostel where we know the owners very well and they had like a rooftop party. And we rang in the New Year with a bunch of other expats and people that we had grown very close to. And that was, that was.

WAND: [01:31:57] And what about your family? Did they visit you or did you?

SILVA: [01:32:00] Actually, so we were, uh, between my parents coming to visit me or me going back to the States in the middle of my service. Exactly in the middle. After 15 months, I went back to America for a month.

WAND: [01:32:13] Mm.

SILVA: [01:32:13] My parents paid for me to go back. And I just remember immense culture shock, you know, like I had no idea what I was doing or where I was going. And had a chance to visit with my family. And did just like, you know, went everywhere. I think that was when I kind of like, you know, like I should have had like a good going away kind of thing like that before I left for Peace Corps. But I didn't have that. So when I came back, I went and saw all the people that I needed to see before I left again. And

so I spent a week in D.C., I spent a week in New York. I spent like going to North Carolina. And then I was just all over the place during that time. And saw everyone that was very important to me and came back kind of feeling like, I can do this next year.

WAND: [01:33:01] So you started another school year then?

SILVA: [01:33:03] Yeah.

WAND: [01:33:03] Right. So when you, when did you actually leave? Did you finish that second school year or did you. So when?

SILVA: [01:33:11] I left in June, end of June 2015. This ended my service. I left. After I left my service, I went to, went to Bali for a few days and then came back and visited my old host families and then left.

WAND: [01:33:29] Sounds like you like Bali.

SILVA: [01:33:31] Bali was nice because I only got to go once for a few days with other volunteers, so I didn't really get to explore much of that.

WAND: [01:33:38] So you were able to do that a little bit more?

SILVA: [01:33:40] Yeah, I only went twice. Other people have gone much more. I wasn't as fortunate.

WAND: [01:33:45] Right. So let's talk a little bit now, so you've been back from your experience for?

SILVA: [01:33:54] A year and a half.

WAND: [01:33:55] A year and a half. Right. So, uh, and you're working now for the National Peace Corps Association. So how did you happen to find your way to the National Peace Corps Association? What did you do when you came back?

SILVA: [01:34:08] So I came back and I took the summer off in New York. And I spent it traveling with my family and meeting with a lot of people and kind of just taking a break and letting readjustments sink in. And applying for jobs, of course. And spending time with my family mostly. And then I was, I had waited because my dad said, we're going on this trip, so make sure you don't have anything. And I didn't want to have like jobs lined up and then say, sorry, I'm not going to come. I'm going to be in Florida. So we did our, what my dad believed would be our last opportunity for a family trip with the five of us. So we drove 27 hours down the coast again, this time to Florida. And it was the first trip that we had been on in a long time. So that was nice.

SILVA: [01:34:56] And after that I came back and I was like, I told my parents, I was like, okay, well, regardless, September, I have to move somewhere, I have to leave. So I kind of like gave myself these parameters because I hadn't lived at home since I was 17 years old. So, you know, eight years down the line, I'm not going to start living at home again. I wasn't really used to it. And I was like, I'm between New York and D.C. And D.C. gave me more bang for my buck. And more better opportunities I think for my field. So I was very passionate about, I worked in non-profits for about, before Peace Corps for, since 2007 and was very familiar with communications. And I had gone to, in September, I went to the Peace Corps career fair that they had and met with some, a lot of potential recruiters. And I knew that I didn't want to go into federal work. At first when I came back, I thought I might want to do federal or corporate and try it out and see if it fit. But I decided not to do federal at that time.

SILVA: [01:36:02] And then was a finalist for a job at an international development firm. And then, um, it fell through. The position fell through. And I remember Glenn [Blumhorst], who's our president, CEO now, at National Peace Corps Association. We also met at that time. And he had seen that I had fundraising experience and said, you know, this is a great time for you to come join us. And so we got coffee and or I pretty much just came to the office and then he said, you're going to be a fellow for us. And I was at a point where I was working, I was doing two serving jobs. I was really distraught from the, from, you know, dismayed by this opportunity falling through, the first one. But it was a blessing in disguise. And came to

NPCA as a development fellow literally the next day and just kind of hit the ground running, working there.

WAND: [01:37:03] And when did you start there?

SILVA: [01:37:05] I started in November.

WAND: [01:37:08] November of 2015?

SILVA: [01:37:11] 2015. And started as a development fellow. And normally the fellowships I think were supposed to be like three months and I stayed for five months. So I started off with the fundraising study and after that I started working on this campaign that was being led by a pro-bono team of RPCVs. And after we were, we were going to raise all this money. And I ended up being the liaison between NPCA and the pro bono team. And just, uh, we raised about \$107,000 altogether. And I think because of that then they were able to make the case, you know, that they should, that they should bring me on as staff.

WAND: [01:37:58] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [01:37:59] So because regardless, I was kind of deciding, okay, well, maybe I should like, you know, April or so I had. I had used up all of my savings so that I could work there, you know, and I was getting rid of my other serving shifts that I was working 77 hours at that point on this campaign a week for free.

WAND: [01:38:20] Now how many hours were you working for pay someplace else?

SILVA: [01:38:24] Um, 20. 20 to 30.

WAND: [01:38:26] And that's how you were basically?

SILVA: [01:38:28] Living, yeah.

WAND: [01:38:28] Buying your food and paying the rent.

SILVA: [01:38:30] So it was, um, it was a lot, you know, I had, I was exhausted. And I had essentially like, you know, I loved working there and I was very passionate about it. But I just remember, like telling Glenn and Anne [Baker] both, you know, just letting them know that, well, after this campaign is finished, I will need to move on. I had no intention of them hiring me. I didn't, I had no expectation. You know, I knew that we were tight for funding and things like that. But Glenn had always said, like, we really want to bring you onto the team. Like he had been saying this since I came on, that his intention was to hire me.

WAND: [01:39:05] Right.

SILVA: [01:39:08] So I just kind of said, like, I need to move on after, after April. So I just. And then we had, they had made the case to the board. And I came on to do development and partnerships. And so I've been there since.

WAND: [01:39:25] Yeah, that's great. Well, wow. It's a good, a good long run here in terms of your relationship with Peace Corps. So, um. Let's just end this with a really good question about, I think, about how that Peace Corps experience, that Indonesian experience has influenced you. And what, what are your takeaways? If somebody asked you, uh, what did you learn in the Peace Corps, how would you sum that up?

SILVA: [01:40:07] I learned humanity. There is, you know, at the end of my service, everyone was asking, like, what was your most, what was your favorite experience? Or what did you really take away from it? And my favorite experience and most memorable, I'd say, was one of my friends had passed away. My Indonesian friend had passed away. And in Islam, it's looked down upon to mourn or wail. When someone passes away, you accept it as the will of Allah. And I remember going to the house to pay my respects. And after everyone left, his mother broke down and I was holding his mother in my arms and she's just crying. And all the walls and barriers had been broken down because at the end of the day, like I felt like I had become so much a part of them and them so much a part of me that we were able to just be so vulnerable with each other.

SILVA: [01:41:06] And that I felt was like the beauty of life. If we can go anywhere and we can see like a heart to a heart. That's what I felt was what Peace Corps gave me. And it's a potential that you don't really understand or connection you don't understand until you've had that elsewhere. And so I think I still search for that community here. And I found parts of it. But it's not, it's not as like fully encroached yet.

WAND: [01:41:38] Mm hmm.

SILVA: [01:41:38] As it was in my Peace Corps experience so.

WAND: [01:41:40] Right.

SILVA: [01:41:41] That's, that's pretty much it.

WAND: [01:41:44] What a great way to sum up an important experience in your life. Thank you so much for this interview.

SILVA: [01:41:51] Of course. Thank you, Pat.

WAND: [01:41:51] Very, very interesting.

[END OF INTERVIEW]