

Hi Professor,

I didn't think you were going to listen to these recordings so soon. Like, I know we agreed that I would send them one at a time as they were done, internet access permitting, but that's surprisingly a pretty big point. I mean, I thought you thought that there wasn't much of an internet here. Because that's what most people assume. And I get it, kind of, the Philippines is a developing country, so we must still have pay phones right? Or not even pay phones. Those are too modern. Well, maybe in some parts of the country, it's like that. But I mean... That's a hair split that most people don't care about is what I mean. And yes, there's sometimes an issue with data capping or too many people on the WiFi at once, but that's a problem everywhere.

Maybe I shouldn't have been surprised that you would see the real situation through the fog. But also, don't you have a lot of grading to do? Or paperwork? Or something. I thought breaks weren't really breaks for university faculty and staff, but hey, I'm open to being wrong.

Anyway, I got your email, your questions, and your once again vague guidelines on how long my answers should be or how I should format them. That's probably the point though. I mean, it's always been the point.

Anyway, this is my attempt at answering them.

(Pause) Question one. "What do you think home is?"

What not where...? *(whispering)* "What do you think home is?" *(normal voice)*
Yeah, that's what not where. I don't know which would have been harder to answer, to be honest. I grew up in a predominantly white community. Predominantly as in, my

family was the exception. My parents were sent to Arizona for work, and they chose that area because it had a good school system. Read into that what you will, but this isn't about that. It's about this... This sense like... This feeling that I was an outsider, but none of the other students had realized it.

Yes, this was a school ground, so there was a sense of 'othering' that inevitably happened because kids can be just as cruel as the adults they model their behavior off of, but you know, we overlook that part. However, this so-called inevitable 'othering' did not happen to me. Which is something I've always found kind of odd, but I'll count my blessings.

Maybe my skin tone was fair enough that no one put two and two together, but I don't know. I know I kept my head down, and the teachers liked me enough that they would have come to my defense if need be, so there's that. But no, the place I wasn't raised wasn't exactly home.

And the Philippines isn't exactly home because of all the reasons I've talked about before. I just wasn't here. I wasn't here when I maybe should have been. I don't know if I should have been.

(sigh) Things could have worked out for me in America. I was slated to go to a good university with scholarships, and maybe if I was still fully--how they say--able-bodied, I'd be okay. I'd be happy somewhere that wasn't Arizona. But that's not the point.

But that's 'where,' hypothetical or otherwise. In terms of what I think 'home' is, I guess I could make a joke about it being the place where your phone automatically

connects to the WiFi, but my phone does that at school, and that's not home. Super not home. So time can't be a factor either. Or maybe quality time? Productive time? *(Sigh)* But then what is quality or productivity?

I guess I should have looked over these questions before I started recording. I also should have prepared something. But I didn't.

I could say that it was a time issue, but it was not exactly. Or it did not have to be. Basically, I got distracted. Needless. There are vendors who go around from house to house in the neighborhood, various types but also Sorbeteros. Think ice cream man but not. Look, they have cheese flavored ice cream here, which I know I should not like, but I do. And the Sorbeteros are the ones who bring it around. So... Yeah, I always get some. And I think they've heard about me and that I like cheese-flavored ice cream. because Lola said they don't typically come out this far on the street--we are on the edge of the neighborhood after all--but the guy has started coming out here. And with the cheese ice cream. That part's pretty great.

(Pause)

Come to think of it, some people call home the place that always has your favorite flavor of ice cream or dessert of choice. But I guess if you combine that with the WiFi thing, then home is where everything falls together. Home is where things come together for you. And they are the way you like it or the way you need it to be. But there's implications to that for me. Because nothing is ever going to fall into place like that for me. We can't afford to make the adjustments to our home that will make it more comfortable with my current state, and I don't even think we fully know what those

adaptations would be, but maybe you can hire someone to figure that out. If you can afford it. You can definitely hire someone for that, but we can't either way. So... Yeah. Next question. "How do you define 'belonging?'"

Having a place. Having a purpose. Or doing something. Like contributing something. Or just fitting in. Okay, those can't all coexist as answers, I get it, but also I don't because I feel like this has to be my answer.

Oh no wait, better way of saying it. It's about integrating into a community or into something larger than yourself. Finding a real place with your name on it. And the reason for the name written on the page might change from person to person. But you're not the one who wrote it down; it's something that you're offered. You can try and get it, but at the end of the day, if no one wants you, can you truly say that you belong? I don't think so. Sorry but I don't.

(Pause) Next. "What is 'family?'"

The people willing to stick with you through thick and thin. Like, yes, the family card can be reassigned and revoked by bad behavior, but for the most part, it's just the deck of cards you were born playing with. Not like a 52 card standard poker deck, if that's what they're called. But you see, trading card games were a hit when I was younger, and that's what I'm thinking about.

(Sigh)

I can faintly hear a storm brewing. I don't think you will be able to because I do noise-reduce these tracks. I don't quite know what that does, but I think it helps.

So I can't really go into much more details now is the point. Lola doesn't want us using too many electronics during storms, especially if they have to be plugged in like this one does. Recording takes a lot of battery power for my laptop. To fill the time, we'll probably be playing some games in the car park area.

Frick. a game. Physical game. There's no monopoly here. No one thinks to purchase board games, and there's only so long one can last with so many kids around, so it would have to be a frequent purchase. And yeah, that's all set up to fail.

You know, I really thought for a second that I was going to avoid the worst of this. You know because it hadn't come up so far, and we're already like six days in... And *(inhale)* And I just thought I wasn't going to have to show my godson this issue, and... *(breath)* My godson still looks at me like I put the sun in the sky because I'm the cool American godmother, *(breath)* American doesn't really mean anything in that context; I'm the far away god mother. *(Inhale)* And that made me cool because he didn't have to see me, and he didn't have to see my limitations, but that's going to come crashing down now. *(Inhale)* Crashing. Down. So hard.

(inhale) He's family. And considering I don't know if I can or should have kids in my state, he may be the closest thing to my own kid that I'll ever get, *(inhale)* and now I have to go let him down now.

It would have been really great if you could have sent me more than three questions.

(Pause. Music fades in)

The Mountain's Heart is a production of Hugot Podcasting. And this end song comes from the Sounds like an Earful music supply. See you in two weeks.