

WEEK 2

I cannot personally relate to his message, as I grew up attending private schools most of my life. I was born into a family of surgeons and published authors, so my education was of the utmost importance. However, I have had the privilege of travelling the world—but not in a privileged way. I joined the US ARMY at the age of 19 and traveled to 3rd world countries in a time of war. I served in Operation Enduring Freedom from 2010-2011.

The first interaction I had with the people of Afghanistan was on a COB in Jalalabad. There were no women permitted on the base and the men were mere farmers from the surrounding communities. Most *towns* were without power, below ground sewage, suitable housing, etc. Their education, as an adult male, was equivalent to that of a 7th-8th grader in the United States. The women, at the time and to my knowledge, were not permitted to seek education.

Fast forward 12 years. Yes, I can see how the programs, theories, and availability would and could completely alter the cultural learning of any demographic. Up until September of 2021, the women, men and children of Afghanistan met liberties in the past 10 years that they would've thought impossible over centuries as a country. Organizations were formed, schools were filled, women were finally involved in daily aspects of life—it seemed normal.

It burns me to think that all progress made in a desperate country could be revoked in a matter of hours. Less than 24 hours later the Taliban took over the country. Hospitals, schools, businesses, that flourished during the US reign, fled. Afghanistan returned to the stone ages they hailed from pre-war, and there is nothing we can do to help them. There is proof in the research that Afghanistan was progressing as a people by leaps and bounds in the time their officials and the US brought order to their country, together.

I am very passionate about those who don't have a voice. Cultural learning is real, and it is real based on one's culture. I walked away from war knowing that it gave the people of Afghanistan a chance to just—be normal. Like most of the world. They had the right for a short

time, and it proved that they are capable! Their culture simply denies it. I would go back any day of my life to help change that.