WL 604

Welcome to Cameroon

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Family Life

Line-Audrey Nkule Sonkeng

My legal name is Nkule Sonkeng Line-Audrey Maeva. Nkule Sonkeng represents my last names while Line-Audrey Maeva represents my first and middle names. Nkule means "the call of the drum." The drum was used to gather the village for communication and problem solving. It is also a great musical instrument, which explains why my family jokes that we have a history of passionate dancers. Sonkeng means "tree of peace," which is a symbol of unity and communication. It was also rumored to help women give birth to twins when used as a folk medical treatment.

I am from the city of Dschang located in the west province of Cameroon; however, I grew up in Douala, in the center province of Cameroon. Douala is commonly referred to as the economic capital of Cameroon, while Dschang is a mountain tourist resort area. Douala is the largest city because many companies, financial investments and economic activities are based there. The promise of job opportunities has attracted people to settle there in hopes of better financial futures.

By contrast, the touristy, mountainous area of Dschang has an elevation of more than 4,600 feet and is more rural. Dschang is favored by relatively cool temperatures and attractive scenery. Dschang has been an important agricultural and pig farming center because the soils are extremely fertile and temperatures are adequate for pork production.

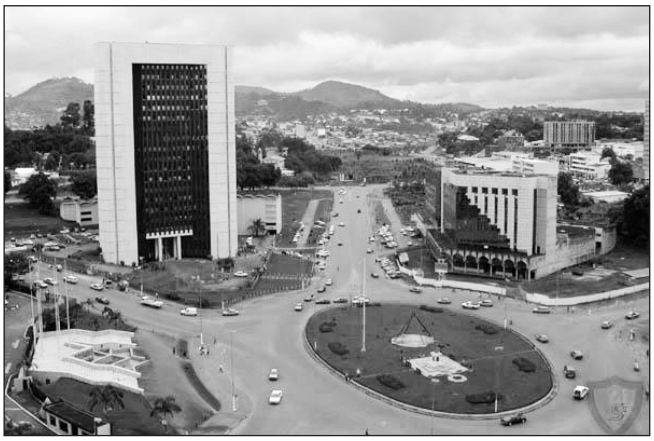
I am the first born of a Bamileke (large ethnic group in the north and west) family of three children including two girls and one boy. Throughout high school I focused on science, mathematics, chemistry and physics, which shaped my path into the engineering field. My father always wanted me to have the best education because as they say in my country, "A family's achievement is reflected in the successful education of first-born children."

Studies in America

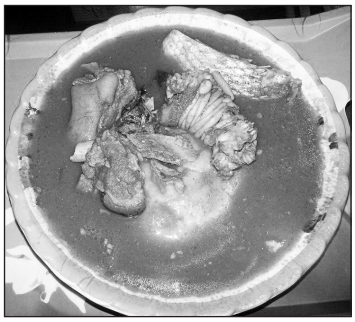
Coming to America to further my education was a huge decision for me. I went to Houston, Texas where I spent a semester in the English as a Second Language Program. Then, I spent a semester at Houston Community College, where I took some general courses for pre-engineering students. Next, I transferred to Howard Community College in Maryland where I was able to complete my associate degree in engineering and graduated with honors. Spring 2016 was my first semester at West Virginia University. Thanks to the WVU Extension CEOS scholarship program, I am looking forward to the chance to travel around West Virginia to discuss Cameroonian culture and learn about the state. This scholarship will help me achieve my goal to be a mining engineer with a degree in civil/environmental engineering with a minor in geology.

Cameroon Fast Facts

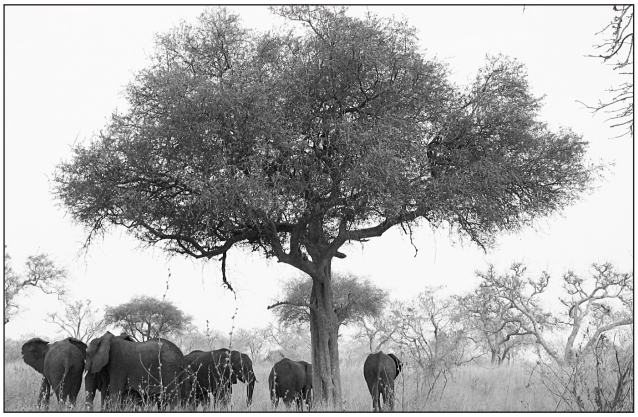
- Cameroon is nicknamed "Africa in Miniature" because of its geological and cultural diversity.
- Its area is slightly bigger than California.
- Its population is 22.6 million. This is more than New York, which is the third most populous state.
- Cameroon's political capital is Yaounde; however, most economic activity takes place in the financial hub Douala.



- Yaounde is home to most of the national monuments and museums of the country.
- The highest point, Mount Cameroon, erupted twice – once in 1922 and more recently in 1999.
- Historically, large territories were led by a king- like ruler called a Fon, who was the head spiritual leader, judge and chief of a tribal area.
- In 1884, Germany colonized the country through the help of Catholic missionaries and named the territory Kamerun.
- It is home to more than 250 different linguistic groups.
- The predominant religion is Catholicism, which is practiced by 40 percent of the population. Protestantism is practiced by 30 percent, and Islam is practiced by about 18 percent.



- Fufu (smashed fermented cassava rolled into balls and dipped into soups), groundnuts (peanuts), bush meats (wild animal game) and palm oils are common foods.
- The most popular dish in Cameroon is fufu served with eru (beef skin stew with spinach and evergreen vines) and ndole (spinach, bitter leaf, peanut, beef and shrimp stew) with plantains.
- Tourists can see Africa's iconic animals including cheetahs, chimpanzees, elephants, giraffes, gorillas, hippopotami and rhinoceroses at popular wildlife reserves, such as Waza National Park.



- Two major beach resort towns are popular: Limbe is an English-speaking town in the southwest region with black volcanic sand and Kribi is a French-speaking city with white sand beaches.
- The western highlands offer beautiful mountain scenery, waterfalls and lakes. The altitude provides a cooler climate for tourists who are not used to the tropical season.
- Major exports are oil, cocoa, cotton, bananas, pineapples, coffee, lumber, aluminum, rubber and palm oil.

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