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Friends? More Like Sisters

Shannon is Māori and Cook Island Māori (yes, there is a difference) and I met her through my flatmates. We have become great friends over the short period of time that we have known each other and have made plans to meet up with each other when she comes to Hawai‘i in 2019 and when I (hopefully) come back to New Zealand for my master’s.

Going through this “interview” with her, I already knew what most of her reactions and responses would be because we have found out that we have almost too much in common. We both grew up in Pacific islander communities, so we both value family, codependence, hard work and much more. I will admit that, in the beginning, it was strange to find someone that I got along with so well. We thought the same way, we treated our families in the same way—it was a bit disorienting. Seeing that the two of us, two Polynesians from completely opposite ends of the Pacific, were nearly identical in character and personality opened my eyes to how close Polynesians actually are (in a broader sense).

The differences that we faced mainly came with the actual geographical differences between us, not the cultural ones. For example, people in New Zealand love lamb meat because it’s something that they have an abundance of. Shannon is no exception to this. Me, on the other hand, well, I like lamb, but I don’t love it. I’m more of a fresh fish kind of person. Shannon rarely eats fish unless it’s battered and deep-fried. Another difference between me and Shannon that is geographically based is how we react to the weather. I love hot weather: I love blue skies, bright sun, and being able to wear shirts and shorts freely. Shannon is more a fan of overcast days that are not too chilly, but are still cooler than my optimal day. It seems that I miss my sunny paradise just a bit.

I will admit that it was a bit difficult to discuss the US in this interview. It's easier to talk about this particular topic from the viewpoint of some of the discussions that I have in my flat. Out of everyone that I live with (six in total, not including me) and the two friends that we have made unofficial flatmates, two of them are New Zealand citizens and two of them have residency here; everyone else is an international student and everyone loves to take the piss out of me for being from "the States." Shannon knows my... frustrations regarding a particular president. She sticks up for me when the boys' jokes become a bit more annoying than I would like to deal with and our comebacks to their jokes are top notch.

Writing all of this out, I realize that maybe I should have interviewed someone besides Shannon—we have admitted to each other on more than one occasion that we are nearly the same person. It may have been beneficial to interview someone else that I lived with or, better yet, someone from one of my lectures, but I knew that Shannon would do me this favor because I would have done the same for her if the situation was switched.