

Steve Nakana's Exile Influences Pursuit of Equity

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Steve Nakana's story begins in exile, but continues with an incredible global journey that has, to our great excitement, landed with our team.

Steve's cross-cultural, cross-country experience brings a powerful perspective on social justice and equity. Read on to find out about his plans for enhancing our work in these areas.

How would you describe your job to a first grader?

My job is helping our team use their talents and expertise to make sure that our actions contribute to everyone's well-being without leaving anyone behind or made worse off.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

When growing up, I first wanted to be a pilot, but when I reached my teens, becoming a diplomat became something I truly wanted to become.

Can you share a bit about your background and how you came to join the Port team? I have a somewhat interesting personal history. I am from Cape Town, South Africa. However, I was born in Lusaka, Zambia, where my family and I were exiled for a period of 27 years when South Africa was under apartheid rule.

During that time, I lived in Zambia and Tanzania, and I also traveled to multiple countries including Zimbabwe and England. This experience exposed me to multiple cultures and strengthened my ability to learn and speak multiple languages. These include Ki-Swahili (Tanzania), Nyanja and Bemba (Zambia), Xhosa and Zulu (South Africa) and French.

I also developed my love of travel, meeting new people and eating different kinds of food. My family and I moved back to South Africa in the early 1990s and I became highly involved in social activism, particularly social justice issues and non-violent conflict resolution.

My activism also influenced my academic and professional career goals in international development, particularly in the social justice field. I have worked as a policy researcher, peace building advisor, an interest-based negotiation and mediation trainer, curriculum development advisor, program and project management trainer; and an instructor in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, history and politics.

What is your top priority in your newly created role?

My top priority is to learn about all the equity we have already engaged in and work collaboratively with my colleagues and other key stakeholders in designing, developing and implementing a social equity program.

What aspect of your job keeps you up at night?

What keeps me up at night is thinking about how best to implement the social equity program and show that this work is about making sure that everybody is fairly treated and provided the opportunity to succeed, and also, to show that diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and expertise lead to good decision-making processes. Teams that are diverse and inclusive challenge each other and are more productive, which in turn, makes an organization more innovative.

What can you share about yourself that might surprise others?

I went white water rafting on the Zambezi River in Zambia, which is regarded as one of the most dangerous rivers to raft in the world. I lived to tell the tale!

I am a true extrovert and I call myself an Afro-politan. Reach out to me if you want to find out what that means!



Steve outlines our career paths for youth at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization.