

### Episode 3: “I am Going to the Peace Corps”

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[ANNOUNCER, MUSIC UNDER]

*“This program is a production the Rutgers Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs.”*

[MUSIC UP FULL]

[OPEN MONTAGE OF SOTS FROM TV SHOW, MUSIC UNDER]

*“Rutgers’ vision//globalized world//international learning//unique opportunities//global health//study abroad//expand my horizons.”*

[MUSIC UP FULL]

[HOST PRITA SINHA, MUSIC UNDER]

*“This is... Rutgers Around the World— a finger on the pulse of all things global at Rutgers.”*

[MUSIC STINGS]

**HOST:** Hi, I’m Prita Sinha, Rutgers senior and host of the podcast *Rutgers Around the World*. Welcome.

Have you considered joining the Peace Corps, but never followed through because you think you aren’t qualified or you don’t know what you need to do apply. Well our next guest is here to talk to you about why you shouldn’t be discouraged. Shawn Riley is a senior majoring in nutritional sciences at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences who successfully completed her Peace Corp application. She has been invited to serve in the Peace Corp and will be leaving for Cameroon in the fall.

Shawn joins us now at the GAIA Center studios. Thanks for being here and congratulations.

**SHAWN RILEY:** Hi, thank you.

**HOST:** So, what attracted you to the Peace Corps itself and then this particular opportunity in Cameroon?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I’ve always had a love for service when I was thinking about what I wanted to do after graduation. I started to look into the Peace Corps, and then I started to look into other programs as well, but what kind of what brought me back to the Peace Corps was just the service of immersing yourself in a different culture and really becoming a part of that culture before you are able to serve them instead of... just patch on service, and just going and helping and then leaving.

Cameroon, in particular? I always definitely wanted to go to Africa, so once I did my research, I learned more about Cameroon—not knowing too much about it before that, and I kind of just loved the idea of it. The idea of such a diverse country in the middle of Africa that really embodies a bunch of different cultures.

**HOST:** Are you doing anything to sort of prepare yourself before you leave in the fall?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I have definitely been doing some research on Cameroon. I’m taking a global health perspectives class where my reference country that I do a lot of my assignments on is Cameroon, so I’ve definitely been getting a lot of insight through that on different like health issues within Cameroon which I will be working on as a community health volunteer there. But I also, like, just more personally, I’ve been

contacting different people who have either served in the Peace Corps, or are currently in different countries. And I've been connected with a few people who have been in Cameroon or are currently in Cameroon, so that's been very helpful... and just talking to different people about it really helps to kind of mentally like prepare myself for the experience and the different questions I get asked about it.

**HOST:** Well, a lot of people seem to think that the application process is really rigorous, but you told us earlier that the Peace Corps application was not daunting for you. What did you mean by that, and can you tell some steps that you took in applying?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I definitely heard more about the application process being very daunting after the fact of applying so when I was reflecting on it, I personally didn't find it as intimidating. It was nothing more intense than maybe another internship or job opportunity, like there's a personal statement for you to make um, of as to why you feel like you should be going to the Peace Corps and why you feel like that's a good fit for you and how you fit in with the ideals of the Peace Corps so that was the main part of the application process. But the rest is kind of highlighting the things that you've done and if, I've already had tons of uh different experiences and service opportunities so that was kind of easy to write about and express in my application. I definitely thought about it for over a year or so, so throughout that time when I was thinking about it I like started taking on different leadership opportunities in order to allow myself to like stand out on an application.

**HOST:** Do you have any tips for perspective Peace Corps applicants listening to this podcast?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I would definitely say to gain as much information as they can to really look into all the opportunities that are out there if they have a desire to go serve abroad, or even locally—because I spent at least a year looking at Peace Corps and then tons of different other organizations, as well. And through looking at those other organizations, it helped me to better see why I felt like I wanted to serve in the Peace Corp, as well as just speaking to your family very early on about the decision.

**HOST:** What exactly did you tell your parents?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I initially told... sat down with my mom in September after I applied, so it was before I knew I was being considered for any programs, before I had any interviews—just so she was aware that I was thinking about this decision, so that definitely helped to hear her feedback on the decision... which she was not thrilled about at first, which is completely understandable. It's a long time and very scary for your child to go abroad, but I just kind of let her have time to think about it for a while. I would mention it here and there, but then once I officially had an interview and was accepted to a program and had to make that decision of whether I was going to accept the position or not, I spoke to her about it again and I could still... I knew she was uneasy about the idea, but she definitely expressed her support by saying how she was proud of me, and she definitely saw that this was something that I really desired to do. And that really has helped me to feel more comfortable in my decision.

**HOST:** Do you think being in Cameroon for two years will affect your interactions with friends and family here in the U.S.?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I'm hoping my experience there will allow me to have a better relationship with my friends and family once I come back. Once I'm able to share with them the experience that I had and I can bring that to them—and I'm definitely hoping some people will come over and visit, friends and family, so that they can share a little bit of the experience with me while I'm there.

**HOST:** Going off of that, are you planning to take anything from home to make your transition in Cameroon easier, you know maybe to help with home sickness?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I've been thinking of different personal things that I've been told by many volunteers, "Don't over pack." Pictures are definitely a thing I'm going to bring. I love to have pictures on my wall or wherever just to sort of remind me of different people back home. I also... my favorite animals are ducks, so I have tons of rubber ducks, and I think that I'll probably end up bringing maybe a few of those.

**HOST:** So it sounds like you are sharing a bit of your personal life when you get there, but have you thought about what you are going to do after you get back from your service and you know if these experiences in the Peace Corps will help further your professional goals in any way?

**SHAWN RILEY:** I definitely have learned not to set my plans in stone, and they constantly are changing. I've been very grateful for that, because I love the way that they are turning out. But I thought about either grad school, doing either... becoming a dietician or something more in the public health field, and more recently, I definitely have been thinking about being more involved in some type of NGO after I graduate—so, I think service is just going to continue to probably be a very large part of my life, to be able to use my education to contribute back to others.

**HOST:** Well, Shawn, please keep us posted on your Peace Corps mission and good luck and thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us today.

**SHAWN RILEY:** Yea, thank you.

**HOST:** That was Shawn Riley a senior at Rutgers majoring in nutritional science. Shawn has been invited to serve in the Peace Corp in Cameroon beginning this fall. Find out how you too can apply to the Peace Corp. Go to [global.rutgers.edu](http://global.rutgers.edu) and make an appointment with our campus Peace Corp recruiter.

That's all for this episode of Rutgers Around the World. Join us next time as we discuss all things global with members of the Rutgers community.

Thanks for listening.

*[MUSIC STINGS]*