Cross-Continental Friendship Sheds Light on Situation in Mali

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

This fall KMXT spoke with local resident Heather Preece and her friend, Mahim Toure, who was visiting from Mali, West Africa. Toure met Preece more than 20 years ago when they worked together on a nutrition surveillance program in the northern region of Mali.
The two reunited in October when Toure came to visit Preece and her family in Kodiak. For the better part of a month Toure took English language classes at Kodiak College, gave presentations on Mali to schools and community members and even spent some time sharing West African music in the studios at KMXT.

KMXT’s Brianna Gibbs recently caught up with Preece, who said Toure returned to Mali safely, but conditions in his country have not improved.

-- (Mahim Update 1 :35 “Yes, as far as my understanding is, just this… he is kind of the uncle.”)

Preece said Toure has been volunteering for the last 10 months. She said his wife and child have followed him to the capitol of Mali, but his father has decided to stay in Mopti.

-- (Mahim Update 2 :42 “His father is 92, his father is …causes of the war, but he’s not moving.”)

Preece said the news from Mali isn’t good, and hearing about it is hard after her and Toure’s long awaited reunion

this fall.

-- (Mahim Update 3 :43 “I’m been following it since the coupe in…displaced by this conflict.”)

Coverage of the rising conflicts in Mali has been widespread throughout the world. Preece said the United Nations is very aware of the situation, but so far there has been little involvement.

-- (Mahim Update 4 :53 “I understand it’s very…when, why, how they should intervene.”)

Preece said her friendship with Toure has been an eye-opening opportunity to view the world through a different set of eyes.

-- (Mahim Update 5 :45 “Things that happen around …has right now to a saner world.”)

Any community members who would like updates on the situation in Mali and specifically about Toure, his family and various organizations he works with can contact Heather Preece to be put on a group email list. Preece said here and there she will also send packages or money wires to Toure that the community can get involved with. Beyond that she encourages those who are still in contact with Toure to keep writing him and stay informed on issues beyond the scope of Kodiak or even the United States.

I’m Brianna Gibbs.

UPDATE: There has been movement by French forces since KMXT last spoke with Preece. The Guardian reports that French troops have begun military operations including air strikes in Mali under the direction of French President François Hollande.
Facts remain uncertain, but a handful of media outlets are reporting that Islamic forces are withdrawing from major towns under their control.

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