

If I could travel for the purpose of making connections with and understanding the concerns of the people who live in the region, I would go there. This place of natural beauty has been transformed into a region where people live in constant fear and confusion. The chief concerns for the people of Swat are the presence of the Taliban, and its effects including anti-American sentiment and lack of education for girls. I would try to connect with these people, and inquire about how they believe peace can be achieved, and ask what they would like to see for education...

One issue that arises from Taliban influence is anti-American sentiment among the people of Swat. As an American of Pakistani ancestry, I would travel to Swat to try and better understand the causes for this widespread dislike of American policies and Western leaders...

One of the most pressing concerns of Swat valley's residents are the concerns of the women – the girls. These bright, passionate young women are eager to go to school and learn – but they cannot. Due to the Taliban occupation and the messages that float over FM radio, families are either too scared to send their daughters to school, or simply unwilling to. Recently, light has been shed on this situation through the efforts of Malala Yousufzai, a girl from Swat who has struggled to go to school, and has almost paid with her own life (Symington).

Moreover, schools can be miles away, through dangerous areas. If I could travel to Swat, I would make connections not only with these girls, but with their families. This would broaden my perspective of some of the problems that girls just like me face in other areas of the world.