

### The Hidden Truths Behind Samoan Life

*Sapeta Lele'a is a 66-year-old Samoan woman born in Western Samoa, but later moved to America Samoa. She is currently a single mother and grandmother living in Tacoma, Washington. I interviewed my grandma because I want to learn more about her stories, her life, and her experiences living in Samoa for most of her life. Also, to learn what she felt when she had to move to America and had to experience new changes.*

**Me:** Hello, how are you today? (Assuring if she is comfortable with me asking her questions)

**Sapeta:** I am very blessed today, thank you.

**Me:** What's your name?

**Sapeta:** My name is Sapeta Sefo. (Maiden name)

**Me:** Okay we are going to start our questions now.

**Me:** How was your life growing up in Samoa?

**Sapeta:** My grandma without hesitation within her words immediately responded.

**I grew up in Samoa living a happy and peaceful life. I lived a life where I was free. The days living there I would wake up sweep the trash and rubbish that were outside. I would go clean the house and after that wash the dirty dishes. I would go and gather breadfruit leaves, then after going to watch the kids. I would shower the kids and get them ready for the day. After getting the kids ready I would go and get dry wood to cook with. I prepared some food and ate afterwards. After eating I would go and hang out with the other kids. Me and the other kids played many fun games with each other. There were so many fun and happy things while I was growing up in Samoa. As I grew older, I now have my own family and children. I thought to myself that I wanted to leave here and go elsewhere. I would always see people leave and move to new places. I too wanted to search for a place with many blessings, a place that holds a better future for my family.**

*As I was living in Samoa for a few years I can see where my grandma is coming from. Every day is a routine, wake up, get ready for school, come home, do chores, help prepare the food, clean up everything that the adults ate from, wash the dishes, go shower, and come back and clean the house again. It was a place where you were always busy, every single hour of the day. Samoa is also a place of freedom and worry free. The ability to go wherever without having your parents worry about where you are. I didn't even have a phone in Samoa because my parents didn't need to call me every hour to make sure I was okay; they were certain that I was. It was exhausting living in Samoa, but it is the safest place to live in.*

**Me:** Was your life hard because of the many chores you had to do while growing up?

**Sapeta:** It was very, very hard. It wasn't something easy. Life was such a struggle especially being an older woman it was so hard. All the work I had to do it was a heavy weight on my shoulders that I had to carry myself. All the older boys and the older girls left to start their own families, not looking back and leaving me behind. I was the only one left in the family. Soon, God blessed me with my own family, my own children in that time.

*My grandma is such a hardworking woman. I love her so much. I just can't believe she had to go through so much alone. I respect my grandma as a person, as a woman, and as a person that I look up to.*

**Me:** Was there a time where you really wanted to leave Samoa?

**Sapeta:** Yes, there were times when I wanted to leave. I was so tired of always struggling. I always had to do work everything I had to do, because there was no one else it was just me. The only thing that came to me was the want to leave Samoa. I was tired and exhausted, from having to deal with the hardships of life.

*To even think that my grandma went through all that and still pushed forward. My grandma persevered and overcame.*

**Me:** What are important memories that you keep with you from Samoa?

*Sapeta:* **My important memories that I keep with me are the struggles that I faced every single day. I had to do so much because older siblings would leave to go have fun while I had to do the work. I would go home make food, go check the plantations, come back and do everything else. I would come and set up the table with the food so everyone else could come and eat. Afterwards, I would go shower then come back and clean up all the mess. I had to do so much that I dreaded Samoa and wanted to leave.**

*It's sad to think that the memories that my grandma kept from Samoa are memories of her struggling. It's even sadder to even think for a second that she had to do all the work by herself. It's disappointing that her sibling didn't try to help her with the work. My grandma is a hardworking woman, that I hope to be like when I am older.*

*Me: What happy memories do you have of Samoa?*

*Sapeta:* **My happy memories that I have are as a child when I was hanging out with my friends. I was Having fun playing hide and seek. I would go everywhere together with my friends. We would have dance practices in the afternoon on the sides of the roads. Looking at the people passing by. I was just happy to be able to go places with my friends.**

*I can relate to her happy memories from Samoa, that was me when I was living there. The freedom that you experience living in Samoa is like no other. It's such a safe environment that high schoolers had no cars because they would walk or go ride around on buses throughout the island. We would have youth gathering and dance practices. Living in Samoa, I found memories that could never be replaced. In Samoa it was a life of living freely but safely.*

*Me: Who are the important people in your life?*

*Sapeta:* **I find importance in my husband and my children. My husband and kids are very important to me. As I started my family my parents had passed away. Someone with the priority of my importance is my love for God. My kids were all that I had after my husband had passed away. It was just me and my children. It was very important and special to me to be able to see my grandkids grow up. I was just happy to be able to see them and be with my grandkids.**

*I love how my grandma mentions God as an important person in her life. A lot of people in this world right now do not see what God does for us. You wake up every single day and that's because of God. In this world there are people who don't get the chance to wake up anymore and see the people that they love, you should be grateful that you can. Every morning when I have full mobility and control in my body I look up and say thank you. Without God where would I be right now? I wouldn't be the person that I am without him.*

*Me: Was it hard leaving Samoan and moving to America?*

*Sapeta:* **It wasn't hard it was easy especially with the love of God. God made ways to make it easy for me to move to America. There is nothing difficult for God. If there were any difficulties, I would cry out to the Lord, and he would help me. God made it able for me.**

*I find it amazing that my grandma can find peace in God, even after everything that has happened to her. My grandma saw her moving away from her home a blessing to be able to live in a new home. She never saw it as a negative change but a positive one.*

*Me: You weren't scared of moving to a new place?*

*Sapeta:* **No, I was not scared of anything. I just came and was happy to see how great of a place America is. I thought to myself this is where I was born. I came to the place where I was meant to be. It was filled with opportunities and blessings.**

*Me: What was the difference in environment between America and Samoa?*

*Sapeta:* **There is a very big difference between the environment of America and Samoa. In Samoa everything was considered free food, drinks, just to stay. You didn't have to pay much for anything in Samoa. You were free to hang out wherever. If you had no food, you could go ask a neighbor and they would happily give it to you. You could go ask them for vegetables from their crops for food. Living in Samoa was a very free and easy place to live. The people who saw themselves as poor were at fault. There is so much land that you can make crops and plantations. You could go to the sea and go fishing. When it comes to America it is a very hard and complicated place to live in. If you do not work, it's hard for you to make it by. My kids would get up to go to work early in the morning while it was freezing. There is no**

**place where you can stay freely in America. In America you have to pay for everything the house, the car, and for food. You can't go to the store and ask for something to eat and that you'll pay them back later, not even for a place to stay. Everything in America requires money, there is nothing you can get free in America. The one place where you can find that kind of freedom, that kind of help is in Samoa.**

*As a person who got the chance to live in Samoa and America, I can totally agree with what she is saying. The difference between Samoa's and America's environment is substantial. It was an experience I wasn't able to experience while growing up in America. I always had to be with a family member wherever I went. Growing up in Samoa I was free. I could walk to the store to get something to eat. I lived with my friends (who soon became family) on my own. Wherever I would walk random people would tell me to get home safely or to watch the road. It was a community one big family in Samoa.*

*Me: In your own opinion, is it safer in America or in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: I will always feel safe in Samoa. You can be safe in America, but the only reason why you aren't, is because you do things that make people target you. If you just stay home, you can be safe, but in Samoa you don't need to be in a building to stay safe. It doesn't matter where you are in Samoa, you will be safe. Me:**

*What is something that you miss or can't forget in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: It's hard to forget where you grew up in. Where you grew up with your family. The relationships with the people that you met in your life especially your friends. Wherever I go I will never forget that place that is called Samoa. I will always remember where I came from. Samoa is hard to forget because of the freedom, the easiness, and the peace.**

*Me: When you would go and visit Samoa, what differences would you see?*

**Sapeta: It was such a huge change; it wasn't like the old days. It was something new to see in Samoa, I don't see it the same way anymore. It's something really nice now. A place that is filled with colors. There are more plantations and different kinds of foods. There is so much in Samoa, I know that it is in a good place right now.**

*Me: In your point of view is there a difference in the things that you used to do while growing up in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: Yes, everything that I was used to has changed. There is no difference between Samoa and America in these times. It's no longer like the old days where parents and older people would eat first. It was only until the older folk were done eating then us kids would go eat after. The change that I see now is parents and the kids eating together.**

*Me: Nowadays kids are eating before the older folk are right?*

**Sapeta: Yes, nowadays kids are being fed first and the older folk after.**

*Me: How was the school environment in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: The environment in Samoa is not like the environment you find here. You would go and eat because it was free, but in Samoa there was not that much food. If you didn't have food, most likely other kids would share with you. Kids over here eat in the morning and at lunch, you couldn't find that in Samoa in my times.**

*Me: Did you like going to school in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: Yes, I would go to school, but at the times I would get in trouble and not go to school. If there was no food I would stay home.**

*Me: To you which schools are better, schools in America or in Samoa?*

**Sapeta: Samoa will always be the best place to go to school. Samoa's schools are good because, when your parents tell you to go to school you go. In America you will never know if they went to school, a lot of kids would go to other places besides school. The parents won't know whether or not their kids even went to school. In Samoa you will go to school and the parents will know that you do.**

*Me: Are the schools in America or in Samoa safer?*

**Sapeta: Schools in Samoa are safer than schools in America.**

*Me: Do you have any sad memories in your life?*

**Sapeta: Yes, I have many sad thoughts in my life. Starting with the passing of my husband. I also lost my son in the family. Those are some things that make me sad.**

*People will say that it is hard to lose your parents, but they don't know what it feels like to be a parent and lose your child.*

*Me: While you were growing up did you want to change anything in your life?*

**Sapeta: When I was a child there were big changes in my life. I moved to America and became a new person. As I was in Samoa, I was always starting fights and starting arguments. The only reason I would fight is if someone came up to me first. I never wanted to let my parents know, because I didn't want to get in trouble. Instead, I would tell those wanting to fight me to meet me later in the day in front of the roads to work it out.**

*Me: Are your parents the reason you were like that?*

**Sapeta: No, I was just always like this. It wasn't because of my parents' deaths that I became like this. I grew up like this, even with my parents alive at the time. I just never let my parents know the things that I was doing.**

*Me: Was it hard when your parents passed away?*

**Sapeta: It was hard, it was very hard. It's hard to grow up without parents. Now that I have my own family, I now know it's hard to lose your parents, but as a wife it's hard to lose your partner.**

*Me: Thank you for answering my questions.*

**Sapeta: Thank you.**

