



Introduction:

This activity is inspired by an Instagram account called Barbie Savior. Barbie Savior calls attention to the issues with the well-intentioned—but often problematic—"voluntourism," i.e. short-term volunteer trips. Barbie Savior parodies the voluntourism experience by placing Barbie in various scenes across Africa along with tone deaf captions that demonstrate Barbie's lack of knowledge about her impact as a "voluntourist."

In this activity, you will analyze one of Barbie Savior's posts in terms of the concept of empathy. You will then attempt to coach Barbie on intercultural empathy and how she might consider different perspectives.

Participant Instructions:

1. Begin with a discussion on empathy. Discuss the following questions:
 - How do you define empathy?
 - What do you think are the qualities of an empathetic person?
2. Next, you will be introduced to the concept of intercultural empathy. Use the AAC&U VALUE rubric definition, which is as follows:
 - Benchmark (1): Views the experience of others but does so through own cultural worldview.
 - Milestone (2): Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.
 - Milestone (3): Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.
 - Capstone (4): Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.
3. Discuss the following questions:
 - Do you notice any similarities or differences between your definitions of empathy and the AAC&U's definition?
 - Why is it important that we distinguish between empathy and intercultural empathy?
4. Look at the Barbie Savior image and caption below on the following page.



5. Then, discuss the following questions:

- What do you think was Barbie's mindset when she took this picture and wrote this caption? What were her intentions?
- What are the issues surrounding her mindset? Why might her current viewpoint be problematic?
- Using the AAC&U rubric's definition of intercultural empathy, what might we say to Barbie to help her approach this situation differently?