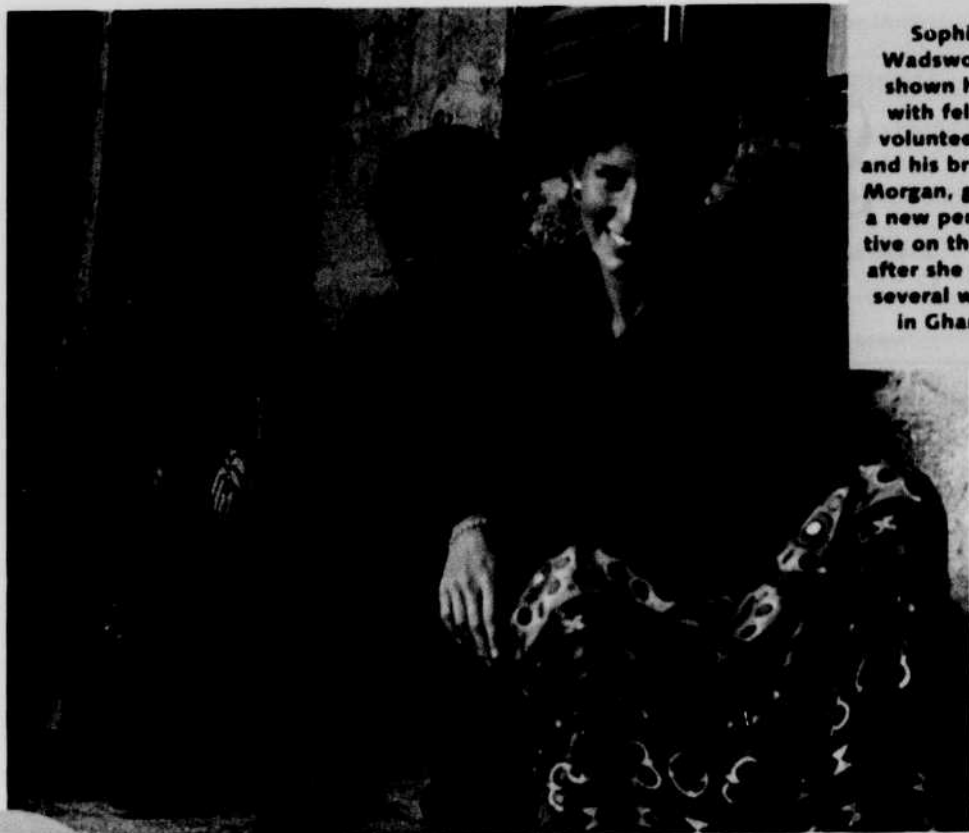


Discovering the Red Earth of Ghana



Sophie Wadsworth, shown here with fellow volunteer DJ and his brother, Morgan, gained a new perspective on the U.S. after she spent several weeks in Ghana.

My
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My desire to learn from a different culture and to experience what it means to be a white, female, U.S. citizen led me to spend six weeks in Ghana, West Africa, this past summer. I started my trip in a workcamp through CIEE. Workcamps are organized by international youth and voluntary service organizations around the world. Volunteers from different countries gather to learn about the host country — and each other — while performing some service to the community.

For three weeks, I worked with people in Toh-Kpalime, a village in the Volta region, to build a public latrine. In contrast to what we had expected, the villagers hardly needed our help — though we did add inspiration, humor and an international spirit to the project. I became good friends with one of the volunteers, DJ, a native of the capital city of Accra. After the workcamp, I spent some time in Ghana traveling with him and staying at his relatives' homes around the country.

Before the trip I expected to feel like a fish out of water — which I did. But I had not anticipated the Ghanaians' overwhelming graciousness with no hint of resentment. Here are some excerpts from a journal I kept during the trip.

June 27, Accra

This morning I saw houses through the wooden fence — light fighting its way through the chinks in the horizontal slats. There I saw the red soil up close for the first time and, beyond the roofs, the gray-blue Gulf of Guinea.

DJ took me through his neighborhood in Adabraca where the electric company turned off the electricity to perform repairs. Streets bumpy with reddish soil, stones, open sewers. Met many of DJ's friends, including Setti, whose work involves translating Islamic texts into English. Elsewhere, in a spare courtyard a TV cast its blue light on a circle of faces: what sudden surrealism to see *The Cosby Show* in this neighborhood where married couples live in rooms hardly bigger than their double mattress.

In each of his friends' houses the routine was the same: He introduced us, his