

Anne Bingham, Personal Reflections

As for what I experienced personally here in Cape Town, it is hard to verbalize, but I will try.

This was my first trip out of the U.S., so the first thing I learned is that everything I take for granted at home is just a bit different here, and sometimes very different. Modes of communication, and transportation, ways of conducting sales transactions, or even what is considered acceptable behaviour all seemed different. The sense of time and punctuality was a big difference. I have quite an extensive list of differences that I have been keeping track of, but I won't bore you with it here.

Something else I learned is that if one is to spend time in South Africa, you must acclimate to the huge unequal distribution of wealth. Some parts of Cape Town look like Beverly Hills, and others don't look like any part of the U.S. It was hard for me to know that things I could buy easily were out of reach for some of the poorest people, and that they might live in this type of poverty their entire lives. As a social worker, I saw poverty, but not as established or widespread as it was here. I saw some hostile looks at times going into the townships from people standing around, and it was hard to know if people were upset because we were Americans or because of the poverty.

That was something else that was noteworthy. Being an American, I got a range of responses. Some people would kind of snap to attention and give me more respect than before I had spoken. Others seemed to be unable to stop staring. I got a lot of strange questions that people had always wondered about the States. No one actually asked about the war in Iraq.

I also learned that although apartheid ended 10 years ago, a lot of turmoil is going on beneath the surface. Everyone has different perspectives. My mentor gave a lengthy speech on the evils of black empowerment, and then a homeless man said that nothing has changed for the better. It was hard to come into this situation without a practical understanding of politics.

Personal safety is not something to be taken for granted. During the time we were in Cape Town, a 20-year-old student was kidnapped and murdered, numerous car-jackings occurred, a man in a restaurant was robbed and shot, and an acquaintance of the group was burglarized in her home.

I learned the value of individual differences that become apparent during an eight-week trip, and the value of putting aside those differences to work as a team. I have a lot of respect for everyone in the group's ability to be mature and responsible when the demand arises.

I also vastly underestimated how difficult it would be to be away from my significant other. I would put that as a caveat for other interns in the future.

I have a new-found respect for anyone from another country who visits or lives in the U.S. I will try to be as welcoming to them as people here were to us.

The organizations I worked with (CPLO and CWD) were so welcoming and gave great assistance on the projects. The CPLO project was very involved and very rewarding. As with anything, I think you get what you put into it. I didn't have too much direct contact with the office, but mostly worked with my written and personal sources.

As a business executive, I think I learned to appreciate individual and cultural differences more. Coming from the non-profit sector, I saw how my business skills could be applicable and useful to an NGO. I also can't underestimate the value of networking. The personal sources for my paper came from CPLO, and one contact would lead to another. The paper wouldn't have been nearly as detailed if I had not had those great personal connections.



Catherine Hart, Personal Reflections

It truly is hard to believe there are only about two weeks left for us in Cape Town. As you all said it would, our time here has flown! I've also been very pleased with the way we have gotten along as a group. I honestly cannot think of a single outburst/fight/argument that has isolated anyone from one another. Although we all have our differences, I think that's what has made us bond so well! We're a unique group, and I've enjoyed the time spent with everyone.

My two projects with CWD have kept me especially busy the last couple weeks, and I anticipate them doing so for the next few days. They've been very interesting projects to work on, and I'm looking forward to sharing the work we've done with everyone. I've spent my time on a youth development project, as well as a marketing strategy for CWD in the U.S. I hope both will prove to be very useful!!

My experience in South Africa has taught me a lot about individual differences, and the importance of effectively working together to succeed as a group...and by this I mean the involvement of individuals in their communities, communities in their cities, and cities within their country...and even the way a group of interns must have respect and appreciation for one another in order to succeed! :) Willingness to learn from others and to cooperatively work with others will get you far in life. That might sound so simple, as I thought it always has, but being here as reinforced how complex it can really be to work as a team. To grow personally and professionally one really needs to understand the value of appreciating others and their differences. This genuinely is the ultimate way to achieve both individual and group success. CWD and Ikamva have also proved this through their efforts to actively involve individuals in the communities around Cape Town in their own development. Together we can empower one another to accomplish remarkable achievements. The communities in Cape Town are living proof.

As for what I will leave behind... That would be the presumptuous part of me that I don't like to think I ever truly had. I think we all have the tendency to be presumptuous in our own ways, and I hope my experience here will make me less assuming about people and situations I've never personally encountered. I didn't have that mindset in its entirety when I came here, but now I know I will never have it.

Phew...I'm getting sentimental now and need to make sure I make the most of the last 14 days we have here! I'll definitely be in touch as summer comes to a close, and will keep you posted regarding ideas/updates for the web page Larry has put together.

Personal Reflections: Jabari Tucker

The two months I have spent in Cape Town have been truly exceptional. There has never been a time in my life in which I received so many rewarding experiences in such a short amount of time. This was the perfect way to complete my education at the University of Notre Dame, to apply my classroom learning in a real world socially responsible situation.

Personally, I believe the most beneficial learning tool of the program is the exposure to both of the worlds in South Africa. These are the "white" world where most inhabitants are well educated and prosperous, and the "black" world which centers on poverty and lack of opportunity. Being able to move in between these cultures, and observing how they interact, allowed me to come away with some very valuable life lessons.

Also, I learned a greater understanding of the world as a whole. Interacting in a different culture has given me greater insight on the examining the positives and negatives of my own. Furthermore, interacting with

people that are different than me has reinforced the idea that one must keep an open mind in dealing with new people and situations. When interacting with people, attempt to understand their viewpoint instead of projecting my own onto them.

Professionally, the most profound benefit is the realization that even the smallest effort to assist other individuals carries a great weight. I will carry this lesson as I progress through my career because I believe corporations have the greatest opportunity to make a difference in this world. I am positive that any student that participates in this program will insure as a business leader that their company acts socially responsibly.

What I hoped that I left behind is a positive image of what I represent, which is a successful African-American male. For the many people that we met, Americans were as much as a mystery to them as they were to us. Stereotypes were present on both sides. Hopefully, especially among the impoverished, they can see what they can achieve by noting my successes.

In reality, this program has given me too great of an experience to describe in words. I feel truly blessed to be able to carry this experience with me throughout my life. I have always felt that it is everyone's responsibility to care for the global community, but now I feel this in real terms. There is no doubt in my mind that I will achieve more, both personally and professionally, haven taken part in this program.

Larry Mullen, Personal Reflections

The past two months in South Africa have been amazing. It is virtually impossible to recount all of the valuable experiences I have had during this time. I have taken hundreds of photographs in an attempt to capture some of these moments and to communicate to others what I experienced while here. Three photos in particular summarize the moments which have impacted me the most.

The first photograph highlights one of the most pressing issues I saw in South Africa, that of HIV-AIDS. I took the photo at a visit to a women's center that is supported by Ikamva Labantu. Both the mother and child have AIDS; but the sad story is that the father of the child attempted to kill him by dousing him in gasoline after he found out the child was sick. This was one of the saddest moments of my trip, as I saw this mother gaze hopelessly on her dieing child and relate this story to our group. The latest figures state that nearly 20% of South Africans have AIDS, with the percentage being much higher in the township areas. Seeing the face of these statistics had a profound effect on me. The AIDS crisis in Africa really hit home.



I took this next photograph in a rural community about 7 hours north of Cape Town. This community remains without electricity and running water and even the simple tasks of cooking and cleaning require extraordinary effort. This small town highlighted the extreme poverty that exists in South Africa and the challenge of economic development in remote, rural areas. One of the reason for the growing number of squatter camps outside of Cape Town is due to the lack of employment in rural areas. The demand for agricultural labor in these communities has be stagnant, while the number of people looking for work as grown. There are little resources to draw on in these communities. This image illustrates to me the harsh reality of many living in South Africa, and the continent as a whole.



The final image is one of hope; a story of a community bettering their livelihood.

In the town of Lamberts Bay on the Western Coast of South Africa, the community is pooling its resources for various development tasks. The photo to the right shows a savings group which was granted a loan from the CWD development fund to purchase motors for their fishing boats. Not only were new jobs created, but social issues, such as youth drug use, have been addressed due to the excitement and activity this project has created in the town. This is an example of what the poor can accomplish when given the proper resources, resources which they decide how to best

allocate.

These three images highlight the impressions of South Africa that I will take home with me. My time here has changed my perspective on the world. It has also increased my understanding of the issues that the poor face, and has shown me how that there are solutions to these problems. There are many issues in South Africa, but also much hope.

My time here will also impact my life going forward. Spending time with CWD and Ikamva has given me a good sense of how NGOs operate. This has been invaluable to me with my discernment of what I will do after graduation and how I am able to use my business skills to assist such organizations.

During my time in Cape Town, I believe that I have added value to our NGOs. At Amy Biehl, I taught their bookkeeper the basics around Excel Macros. With this, he will save approximately 8 hours a month with his reporting tasks. I also spent time working with Ikamva Labantu on the packaging project. Unfortunately, this project did not progress as far as we would have liked due to a lack of assistance from a third-party which limited our analysis. For CWD, I provide two valuable deliverables. The first is a document that outlines recommendations for systems and controls for their community development fund. The second is a website for the development fund, which is the first of its kind. The website will provide a critical link to donors overseas who desire to see the impact their donations are having in the communities (like the purchase of the motors by the fishing project above). The website will also track loans made from the fund, and will detail how the community used the funds, along with the economic, social and environmental impact the project has made. This site will be critical in securing additional contributions to the fund. I will help CWD maintain this site going forward.

I am very grateful to have had this opportunity to represent the University of Notre Dame in South Africa. My time here has been amazing; with experiences that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Mike McPhie, Personal Reflections

My two months in South Africa has left an indelible mark on my life in ways that are hard to write about in simple terms. I will be forever grateful for your generosity in extending this program to me and hope the program continues for many years to come.

This excursion to South Africa was more than a trip, project or internship. It was a chance to learn about ourselves, about a flourishing nation half the world away, and to connect with our peers from ND and South Africa. As I reflect on our opportunity, two themes shone through in distinct ways:

- the sustainability of Hope, and
- the spirit of Ubuntu, an ancient African word from the Zulu and Xhosa languages meaning “Humanity Towards Others”.

As we toured the townships visiting programs and witnessing the mini-pockets of progress, it was eye-opening to view how many blighted areas were seemingly just around the corner from wealth. In mid-day tours, we saw countless destitute and unemployed people milling along with seemingly nothing to occupy their time. We learned through various discussions that while national employment rates ranged from 40 to 45% of the population, it was speculated that in multiple townships the *real* rate was likely closer to 80 or 90% unemployment. But yet – we saw such optimism and smiling faces.

These program tours, coupled with our program work and everyday life in Cape Town, exposed such a phenomenal spirit of Hope and outlook that tomorrow is a better day. We mixed with a people that didn't claim victim status and wait for changes imposed by others. We interacted with people of all colors, classes, and hometowns, and each had a positive outlook towards the future. In America, we hear so often about victimization throughout so many layers of society. But in SA, where the right to claim victimization is visible in all directions, we hear only about hope, opportunity, and a new day.

I chose to include the theme of Ubuntu because it represents a number of unique memories and lessons. While I can't recall a specific conversation where this concept was explained to me, the spirit of ubuntu sustains South Africa and can be directly attributed to their turnaround in the last decade. You can feel this as we learned about how the nation forged ahead peacefully in the shaky days surrounding their first democratic election in 1994. Ubuntu carries forward as we spoke with and learned from people of color about their stories of injustice and discrimination, that are not told with harsh tongues but rather with solemn tones and a hope for a brighter day. Ubuntu is also significant for me because of the origin in tribal languages that are still so prevalent in a nation with 11 official languages.

I am confident that many lessons learned in SA will be applicable both in my professional and personal life in the future to come. I am certain that I have developed a greater understanding and appreciation for people of different backgrounds that will undoubtedly make me more tolerant and patient. As a future business leader in our global world, this experience will forever push me to view the world with a global lens and find a way to measure the impact on others as well our constituents.

As far as leaving things behind, I am confident that our group left behind a spirit of opportunity and positive vision of Americans in a shaky time. We heard on several accounts how unpopular the American way can be right now, i.e. war on terror and in Iraq, but hoped to have changed some minds about the real American way with our service and openness to learning about the struggle in SA. I am confident that our diverse group represented the spirit of Notre Dame.

Lastly, I am honored to have been a part of this fantastic capstone for my education at Notre Dame. Moreover, I view it as a catapult to see the world through a new lens and find ways to have an impact. I am confident that this program, coupled with our educations at ND, and our unique individual backgrounds will afford us new opportunities to make a difference in our futures.

Sarah Coffman, Personal Reflections

This summer in Cape Town has been an incredible experience. The physical beauty and diversity of the country are incredible and, while we have taken full advantage of the recreational opportunities provided, it is the other experiences that have touched our lives and helped open our eyes to the human world all around us.

One of the most memorable experiences of this summer was the first township tour we went on with Ikamva Labantu. During this trip we visited a foster home, three crèches, or preschools, and two old folks' homes. During that day we were transported from the luxurious, touristy side of Cape Town to the black townships. The townships are places where unemployment level reaches as high as 80% in parts, basic needs such as water, electricity, and food are often lacking, and entire families live in one-room shacks. The needs of the people, combined with the expanse of the area, were a bit overwhelming. It was quite apparent that so much needs to be done and the needs that should be filled are immense. I went home that day feeling completely overwhelmed.

I learned two lessons that day. One is that you cannot be cowed by the vastness of any problem. The people we had the pleasure of working with over during our stay in Cape Town try to focus on their areas of expertise, and through running one program at a time, or touching one life at a time, they consider their jobs a success. Yes, there are problems in South Africa, with inequality and racism, poverty and unemployment, an entire generation of uneducated people, and the list goes on. But the only way to solve those problems is by rolling up your sleeves and going to work. I am not suggesting random, unorganized work, but carefully targeted programs, which help some finite number of problems but also empower those they help to in turn offer aid to their peers. This is where we, as interns offered the most value. Most of our work involved analyzing proposed projects to help both Ikamva Labantu and Catholic Welfare Development determine where best to expend their efforts. We also helped analyze existing programs and establish structure to help them work more efficiently.

The second lesson that was more reinforced than learned on the township tour that day was that people are the same everywhere you go. People want to be happy, and they want to be loved, and they want to have a purpose in life. And no more than wealth equating happiness does poverty denote unhappiness. Many of the people we met that day live in households with no income and dirt floors. Yet their eyes shine with hope and happiness, and the warmth with which they greeted us was amazing. Even the old people warmed our hearts as they sang African songs in their native tongue. One of the reasons I chose to come to South Africa for my summer internship was that, before I get caught up in a high-paying, post-MBA job (we all hope, right?) I wanted to remind myself that there are people out there who are much less fortunate than I and I never want to become callous to their needs. I don't want to dismiss those needs, but I feel the real lesson I am bringing home is not what I expected. Rather, it is this. That people are people, no matter where you go. Every person has hopes and dreams, and it is not poverty that is the real tragedy in life, as poverty is a temporary, temporal condition. The real tragedy comes when people lose their hope. Because the hope of many of the South African people has been stifled by the regulations of apartheid for so many years, it is fresh for them at this time, and it is now felt and seen powerfully. The goal of these organizations is not to eradicate poverty, but it is to keep hope alive, and with hope the people will fight to eradicate their own poverty, which will have much longer lasting effects.