

EC students, faculty, and a physician and a minister colleague from the U.S. worked together at four service sites around Cape Town, South Africa. Here are some of their reflections and photos:

"I feel so lucky and blessed to have been able to go on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure to South Africa. Before leaving, I remember being excited and nervous all at the same time because I was not sure what to expect . . . I didn't expect South Africa and its people would have such a large impact on my views and perspectives . . . There were so many memories that were made that I'll always keep close to my heart. It changed me forever and I'm really grateful for that . . . What really inspired and changed my outlook was being in the townships, particularly my service-site, Mokone Primary School in Langa. The entire staff at Mokone was so gracious . . . the students of Mokone were my favorite part of this trip. Their smiles, laughter, positive energy, joy, and optimism made my days so much brighter... It was a very humbling experience to be around these children who have 'nothing' (in America's sense of the word) and many who most likely have health issues, yet they are able to always stay positive and be so embracing. They are literally the happiest people that I have ever met . . . I love living in the States...but after being in Langa, I feel like our priorities in the U.S. are not in order. People in the U.S. place so much importance on materialistic possessions and we tend to focus on ourselves, on our needs, and what surrounds us. If it doesn't personally impact us, then most of us don't care... South Africa has definitely made me grow as a person. ...Many of the people that I crossed paths with in South Africa have it so much worse than I do, yet they were ten times happier than I was at that point... In more ways than one, this incredible journey, without a doubt, has been the most powerful and life-changing experience in my life...I am definitely, without a doubt, returning to South Africa at some point in my life...I met so many lovely individuals whom I plan on staying in contact with. Ebokha [teacher] & the angels at Mokone will always take up a large part of my heart...The following quote from Mr. Nelson Mandela is something that reminds me of what the majority of South Africans stand for":

I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. [In] that way lies defeat and death.

Jenny Rivera (Intercultural Studies)



Jenny (left)

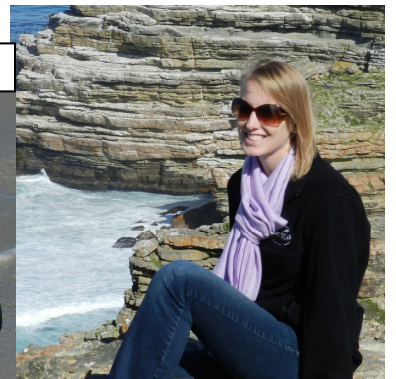


“Spending three weeks in South Africa allowed me to see a culture different from ours. I witnessed many things that changed my view of our culture and our country; these things included the poverty, inadequate housing and children struggling to be educated. Seeing the poverty within the townships and around Cape Town made me appreciate all that the government in America does for those in need of assistance... Seeing the [school] kids so happy made me forget about the sights of township around them. The area around the school was shocking to me... There was a huge difference between the areas where there were land owners and where the shanties were. Seeing these two areas of housing right next to each other put things into perspective for me. It made the apartheid very real and showed me how that government really didn't care about the people in their country... Hearing Noor, Oliver, and the bus driver's stories about living in District Six was very touching, but at the same time they were very hard to hear because it made it that much more real. Seeing all the piles and the glass still laying on the ground made it even harder, and then seeing the old stone of the wall from the movie theatre put me over the top and really upset me, because it made the bulldozing that much more real and made me think about what would happen if that happened in my neighborhood... Traveling to South Africa and the service experience there has changed my perspective on much of the American culture. Many of us are worried about getting the best new item out of the market because that is what our culture shows us, but this trip taught me that you don't need the newest and best items to be happy or to teach students difficult concepts... Seeing the beauty of nature [Cape of Good Hope] made me remember when I was younger and we used to hike and camp. It made me remember you have to enjoy the little things in life and not be busy and in a rush all the time... This trip not only taught me about a different culture, but also a lot about myself.”

Jillian Postma (Early Childhood Education)



Jillian (right)



(left to right→)
George Vlasis
(EC alumnus),
Briana
Looney, Neva
Hillard, Stacey
Swinehart,
Jillian Postma,
Jenny Rivera,
and Samantha
Cerqua

