

In Balance Times

Sunday, May 3rd, 2009

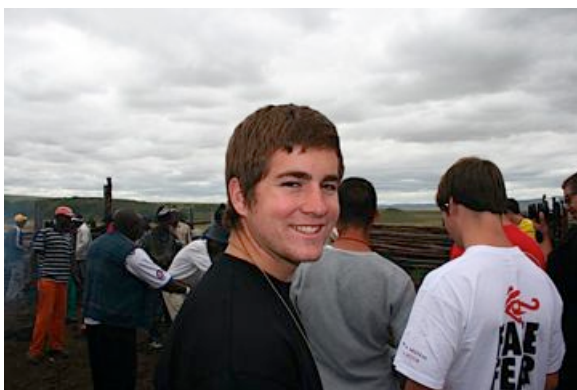
It's Here!!!

We are pleased to announce the triumphant return of the In-Balance Ranch Student Newspaper!

We are excited to showcase some of the wonderful activities and opportunities afforded to In Balance Ranch students. In each issue we will feature student essays, poems, and photographs of recent happenings. Please look for a new version twice per month.

In this issue, contributing writers Sam S. and Wilson H. share their experiences in South Africa. Their reports offer a provocative, sociological examination of America's values...

Another Culture Speaks and I Listen



Contributing Author Sam S.

"My three weeks in South Africa"

I experienced many different aspects of the culture. We spent our time in three different locations: Cape

Town, Khayelitsha, and Durban. All of these cities had unique and diverse ways of doing things and going about life. We always had to remember that there were still scars left from the apartheid and we had to expect that some people wouldn't appreciate our presence.



Villagers wear traditional dress in Cape Town

Cape Town is one of the largest and richest cities in South Africa. Our purpose in this city was to tour and get a taste of the city's history. First we went to a castle originally built by the Dutch to protect them from possible rebellion. All the servers at the restaurants we went to were black. Our initial reaction to the lack of ethnic diversity among lower waged jobs was a sense of inequality; we then realized that roughly 20 years ago, *no* black could hold a job. We were actually witnessing a step forward. Although the apartheid is over in South Africa, when visiting "white" towns like Cape Town, one will still notice the racial tensions.

The Africans were kicked out of their towns and forced to live in small, close-quartered areas called townships. The township of Khayelitsha is home to 2 million black South Africans (and not a single white South African). Our time there was spent

In Balance Times

Sunday, May 3rd, 2009

volunteering at “Educare” centers, living among the families, and playing soccer with the kids. Most, if not all, of the kids at the Educare centers were HIV positive. We played with the kids, helped make a garden, cleaned dishes, and helped out wherever needed.



The children were fed twice a day and they never complained. Being around these children reminded me of the innocence of children. In the midst of their hardship, they were nothing but grateful and were genuinely happy that we were there. Living with another family was a life changing experience. The “mamas” at our homes were always trying to feed us and make us happy. The people were so happy with so few material possessions. It reminded me that I have so many unnecessary items and I’m always looking for the next item of clothing, or other possession, to bring me happiness. Living with this family really reminded me of what *family* is and showed me how close we should be with one another.



South Africans love their soccer. Khayelitsha has a soccer team that doesn’t have any soccer balls, so we brought them soccer balls and attempted to play soccer with them (*attempted* being the key word). The community in Khayelitsha is very close and we truly felt honored to be considered a part of it.



Students appreciate the bird’s eye view of Khayelitsha

The last city we visited was Durban. We went outside of the city to go into the Safari wildlife park, where we saw leopards, elephants, zebras, impalas, rhinos, and giraffes. Before the industrialization of South Africa, these animals once roamed all over the country. Seeing these animals in the wild was a

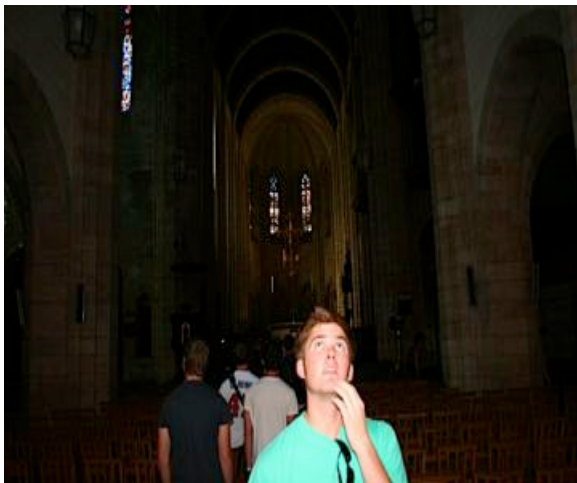
In Balance Times

Sunday, May 3rd, 2009

trip; I felt strangely sad that they no longer roamed free. All of the tourists we met during our time there were friendly and not judgmental of us being Americans.

South Africa's culture is very different in comparison to the United States. After seeing both the luxurious and poor parts of the country, it really brought to surface the different personalities and values of the country. In Cape Town, what is respected by the common person is designer clothing, eating at fine restaurants, being attractive, and owning a large home. In Khayelitsha, what is respected by the community is what one gives back to the community, how the family is treated, and what one does to help others.

Lessons of South Africa



Contributing Writer: Wilson H.

"Musings on South Africa"

The idea of traveling to the African continent has always intrigued me. I always envisioned a third world country, ravished by poverty and famine, with no electricity and an epidemic of AIDS. So, as I

embarked on my journey, a fear of the unknown enveloped me.

The morning of March 11th, I woke up at 4 am and drove to the Tucson airport. After thirty hours of flying and layovers, I landed in Cape Town. I had no idea what to expect. The drive to the house we were staying at revealed a large, illuminated city; the climate reminded me somewhat of San Diego, CA. The next morning we drove into town. Mere blocks from our house, I saw my first glimpse of the damages of apartheid. A small township, made up of shacks, was only a couple hundred yards from mansions and an ocean. I had never witnessed something like that before.

During the Cape Town portion of the trip, we enjoyed good food and experienced the city life.



We spent a couple of nights in the Eastern Cape, where our host father had grown up. The simplicity of life, the tight-knit family, the food, and the overall experience was something I couldn't fully process until days after I returned from Africa. The people there had so little, yet more than enough. Even though we were staying in homes with no running water and no electricity, I felt safe, comfortable, and welcomed. My earlier fear of the

In Balance Times

Sunday, May 3rd, 2009

language barrier and extreme poverty was steadily diminishing as we headed towards the township of Khayelitsha.



Khayelitsha is home to 2 million black South Africans who, during apartheid, were used mainly as a work force to the city of Cape Town. The experience I had in Khayelitsha was similar to that of Cape Town: hospitable and welcoming. The area I was staying in is known for drug abuse, violence, AIDS, and poverty. I now know its softer side. My “mama” was nice, sharing her story, food, and her home with me. While I left with no material objects, I left Khayelitsha with much more than I had before: new perspectives and new stories. In fact, I still ask myself almost daily, *I wonder what Mama Nuncassa is up to?* It helps keep my centered.



After my South Africa experience, I see my situation differently. It has led me to question my priorities and values. I have seen people genuinely happy with very little material wealth, and it makes me question my need for them. How much time am I spending with my family? What things actually fill me up with *good* feelings inside? These are the questions I brought back from South Africa. The answers are inside me.