

Nichols Humanitarian Fund

Follow-Up Reports

2008-2009



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Vanderbilt International Office

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Ariel Albertie

Kampala Project

Let me begin by thanking you for your generous contribution and assistance with my recent international studies and travel to Kampala, Uganda. The support provided by the Nichols Humanitarian Fund went a long way to help me complete my service overseas. The funding that I received was used to not only support my program tuition

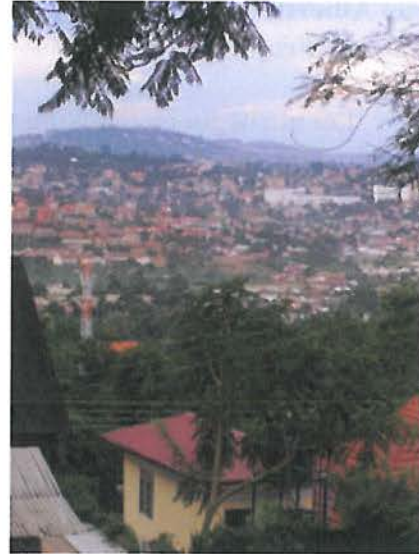


fees, but my airfare as well. Without this grant, I'm not quite sure how I would have been able to afford my travel expenses to Kampala. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Kampala Project and realize that none of it would have been possible had I not been awarded money from the Fund.

The Kampala Project combined my love for service, health care, and traveling. I've committed myself to community service for over 5 years now and I absolutely believe that it has become a part of who I am. Not only have I been able to give back in a variety of ways, but I have gained much more myself. I have not limited myself to one type of service in the past, as I have worked with many different programs and organizations including ones that worked with homelessness, children, and the disabled. After traveling to Uganda, however, I realize that I am interested in working with clinics, hospitals, and other institutions that deal with patients affected by various STD's and infectious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.

One of the goals of the program was learning by immersion. And I, in fact, took full advantage of this one aspect in Kampala. I truly learned more from conversing with locals than I ever have from any textbook or classroom. I spoke with natives from all parts of the country and all walks of life. I spent time with many different people, whether poor or wealthy, and gained a greater understanding of the cultures and customs of Uganda.

While working at Nsambya Home Health Care Clinic, a clinic that specifically targets patients diagnosed with HIV, I learned a lot about the health care system and how it differs from the system in the United States. First, I realized that many of the infections and diseases that I saw first-hand are preventable. Speaking generally, if seen in the United States, many of the infections would be treated efficiently and their resulting diseases would be prevented. However, the lack of education and abundance of stigma that exists when dealing with healthcare prevents many patients in Uganda from receiving the proper treatment. In addition, that does not include other obstacles that many people face such as proper funding and resources. Although it was easy to critique their health care system, I quickly realized that I couldn't help but point the finger at nations such as the United States. Education, money and resources provide affluent countries like the United States with simple solutions to what could be complicated issues. However, we tend to take them all

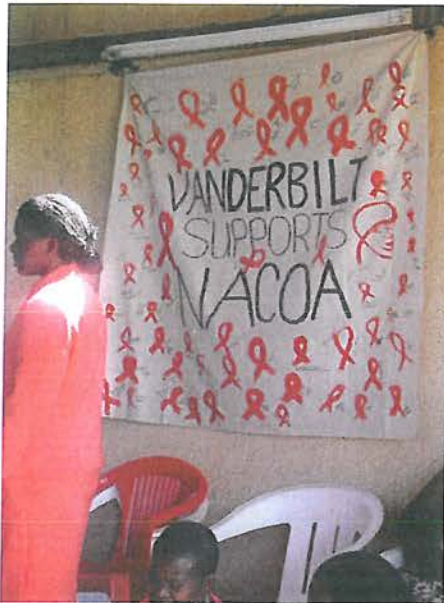


for granted. I now believe that with the proper funding wealthier nations could be a huge asset to countries like Uganda. Similarly, countries like Uganda are wealthy in different ways, and with a lot more compassion the United States health care system could benefit from them as well.

Unfortunately, I now know that the world is very well established and consequently it is nearly impossible to try to change one's lifestyle, especially if it is all one has ever known. Just as the American health care system struggles to lend a helping

hand overseas, countries like Uganda sometimes find it difficult to assimilate and adapt to our ways. I quickly learned that I wasn't there to "change the world" or to "better their lives." I don't believe that I am any better or come from anywhere better than where I was. I now know that we simply do things differently and I wasn't there to change that. Rather, I was in Uganda to learn the ways of the world and it was truly an eye-opening experience.

Overall, the month I spent in Kampala helped me discover a lot about who I am and what I strive to become. I had not had the advantage in the past to experience public



health first-hand, or the direct impact of volunteering and treating affected individuals. Today, I am open to learning something new and discovering different ways in which I can contribute my knowledge to global health. My sense of compassion and understanding both stem from my service experience. My passion for helping others has grown with each one of my service experiences in the past, especially the Kampala Project 2009 and I only hope to capitalize on that through better opportunities and experiences in the near future.



Kimberly Bowerman
VISAGE Cape Town

I will remember my VISAGE trip to South Africa for the rest of my life. The funds provided by this scholarship allowed me to travel to a developing nation and actively engage South African citizens in order to come to a deeper understanding of the everlasting effects of apartheid. Learning about apartheid in class is one thing, but actually seeing the oppressed and hearing their stories of forced removal, brutality, emotional abuse, and death put the country's current state into perspective. I was better able to understand why South Africa still struggles with racism, poverty, and education so many years after the abolition of apartheid.

During lecture in South Africa I came to realize that apartheid was a carefully crafted plan that put blacks and coloreds in the outskirts of the city so that education was unattainable and finding jobs was nearly impossible. This disenfranchised non-whites for generations to come because even today the city is primarily inhabited by whites leaving the blacks and coloreds still in the rural areas with little access to better schools and jobs. This is why even today the poorest people in South Africa are the non-whites.

Because of this, Nelson Mandela's government is continually elected; no matter if a white candidate or a candidate from a different party is more qualified. People are still petrified of another white government. However, South Africa's economy is down, there is a very high unemployment rate, and the education system is horrendous. People are quick to blame the government, yet still elect them year after year without question. This is because there is still deep resentment between races and the non-whites are still trapped in poverty with little opportunity for self-advancement due to apartheid legislation that is still trying to be reversed.

I think the most eye opening experience I had was meeting and talking to white University of Cape Town students. I was startled to see that many of these students had never heard of the truth and reconciliation committee, had no non-white friends, and did not consider the South African government their government. This led me to question the role of teenage white South Africans. This is the first generation to not live under apartheid and I think their role in this country will define the relationship between the races for generations to come.

The service I did in South Africa was going to the township called Manenberg and teaching seventh graders English and Mathematics. I was astounded at the different levels of the children and that some could barely read. I became angry at the system and quite frustrated that these children will probably never find a better life because they don't have access to a good education system and thus will probably never find a job that allows for advancement in society. However, despite this, I think these children are luckier than most others in this world. They have maturity and a level of self-respect from the immense hardships they have faced in their lives that most children will never have to experience. For the amount of teaching I did, they might have taught me more.

This scholarship fund allowed me to have an experience that will last a lifetime. I learned to actively seek out my answers and sometimes the questions only lead to further questions. I cannot express the amount of gratitude I feel for having the opportunity to go to South Africa. The experience was undoubtedly one of a lifetime.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Nichols

I just wanted to extend my deepest gratitude for your scholarship, which allowed me to partake in a service-learning trip to South Africa this summer. I had the time of my life and I learned so much on this trip. I have made lasting memories, friendships, and learned some of life's most important lessons through actively engaging citizens in a developing country and challenging myself and my fellow Vanderbilt students to form deep and meaningful relationships with the people of the township. Thank you again for all that you have done for me. I cannot express how grateful I am.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Bowerman

Natalie Christian
VISAGE Costa Rica

As a VISAGE Costa Rica participant, and with the help of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I embarked for Costa Rica for one month to learn about sustainability, social corporate responsibility, and ecotourism. We engaged in a vast amount of community service to heighten our understanding of these topics. The service projects were among the most memorable and rewarding activities on the trip. For example, in learning about sustainability, we had a lecture about the need for biological corridors (natural links between forested ecosystems) and certain species of birds that would travel across Costa Rica, responsible for pollinating trees that become the basis for such biological corridors. These trees are vastly important as they feed the birds that help them grow, and without which, the bird population would collapse, destroying the corridor itself. It felt great planting 300 trees, knowing the direct positive ecological impact we were making.

Another service project involved weeding a small fair-trade coffee farm, Finca la Bella, after getting to know the history of the farm and its fair-trade practices. We had the chance to purchase coffee from the farm with which we felt personally connected, and had worked to help. We also volunteered at a company called Eco-Bambu, which focuses on creating paper from recycled magazines, newspapers, and books. Like Finca la Bella, we became attached to the cause, and saw that when we bought these products, our money was going directly back into the community—thereby, helping small scale operation continue.

I left the United States for Costa Rica dreaming that it would be a life-changing experience, that I would come back a changed person, and that my eyes would be opened

to a whole new world that I had not yet been exposed to. While this was a completely romanticized view of the results of this trip, the funny thing is that it actually happened.

Going to Costa Rica was one of the most fun and interesting things that I have done. I have learned a lot about the country while visiting, but also realized a lot about myself. This trip has reaffirmed my interest in being an ecology major. It has made me consider more seriously the possibilities of studying abroad and volunteering for Peace Corps. The trip made me realize how much I love being outdoors and being active, two things that have slowly been falling off of my radar since I began high school. It made me appreciate home, but it also exposed me to the wonders of leaving it. I feel rejuvenated and revived after this trip, as if my head has been cleared and I can see a lot of things in a new light.

We were educated about the four stages of culture shock, the last of which involved returning home and readjusting to life by integrating new ideas obtained while abroad with the familiar. As far as navigating Stage Four, I see it more as a continuation of the trip rather than a new stage in my life. Although I think it will be pretty easy to re-assimilate into the life I previously lived, and get used to everything about the United States that is different than Costa Rica, I think it will be nice to infuse a lot of the simplicity that I became accustomed to while away. I will lead the life I led before, just with less clutter and new perception on the topics we studied, such as sustainability and social corporate responsibility. Overall, I think that stage four will be filled with a lot of happiness and excitement. I look forward to taking what I learned in Costa Rica and making it a part of my life in the United States.

To the most charitable Nichols family,

I cannot even express how grateful I am to have received your scholarship and to have been able to embark on such a magnificent and life-changing trip. I have definitely returned from Costa Rica as a more fulfilled person, with expanded horizons and a plethora of new knowledge at my fingertips. Please know that you have dramatically improved my college experience.

Thanks again,

Natalie Christian



Natalie Christian VISAGE Costa Rica



Courtney Marie Corcoran
Kampala Project

My trip to Uganda with the Kampala Project was the most life-changing experience I have ever had and will be an experience on my mind and in my heart. Without the money provided by the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I would not have been able to go on the trip, and as a result, would have missed out on the best month of my life. Despite receiving money from the Kampala Project Fund, the remaining balance was too much, and my inability to afford it would have prohibited my participation in the trip. Having exhausted the other financial resources available in order to pay for the remainder of my tuition balance for the 2008-2009 school year, my immediate and extended family would not have been able to cover the program fee, and I would have had to forego the opportunity completely. Despite my family's recent financial problems which stem from divorce as well as the current economic situation, I have always been blessed with opportunities that have opened doors for me and expanded my horizons. I consider my Kampala Project experience the greatest opportunity I have ever had, and I am truly grateful that I was able to participate as a result of receiving the needed financial assistance from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund.

Having never been abroad before and being financially unable to spend a semester abroad while in college, the Kampala Project was my opportunity to explore a new country as well as experience a different culture. With my interest in the healthcare field and the possible pursuit of a career in nursing, the Kampala Project has furthered my interest in healthcare and opened my eyes to the need of medical assistance and intervention in Uganda. I was amazed at the situation of the healthcare system in Kampala. During conversations I had with clinicians and patients at Reach Out—my internship clinic site that sees to the primary and HIV/AIDS care of thousands of people in the Mbuya Parish area of Kampala—I was able to learn so much from listening to

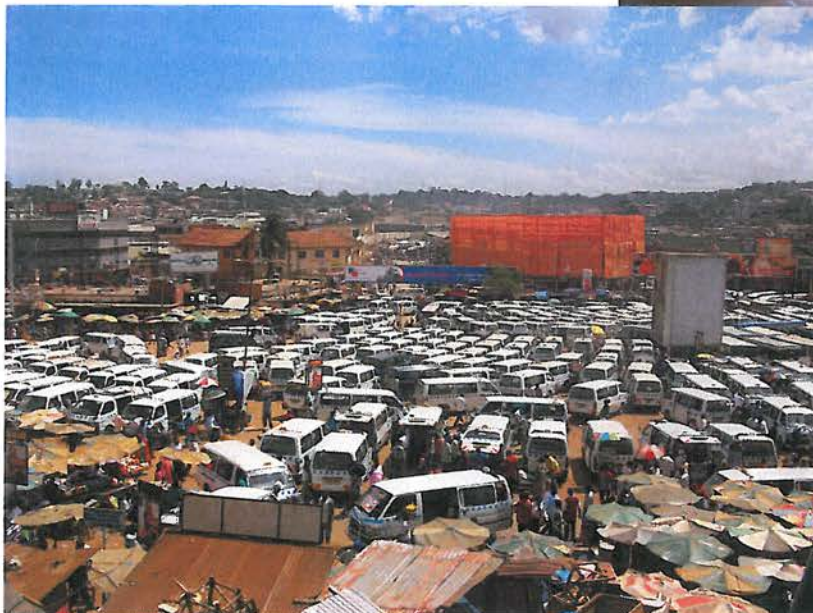
the first-hand experiences of individuals who are providers and recipients of the clinic's services. I learned in my Human and Organizational Development classes as well as my psychology courses that there is no better way to learn about an issue than to ask questions and listen to the individuals directly involved. Although this seems like a common sense concept, until I was in the clinic setting in a developing country in Africa, holding the hands of the people who are dying due to their suppressed immune systems which result from their HIV/AIDS status, I did not realize how the magnitude of an issue like healthcare is present in personal testimonies of patients and caregivers. In a place like Uganda where so much political turmoil and unrest plagues aspects of citizens' lives, the individuals who are suffering with HIV/AIDS are desperate to be heard. Seeing what an impact simply listening and validating the feelings of others has on an individuals' outlook and esteem is probably the most valuable lesson I learned while in Kampala.

Spending time with Reach Out patients who receive healthcare as a result of monetary aid from the United States and many non-government organizations has given me a new appreciation for the programming and initiatives that are currently in place to help individuals suffering with HIV/AIDS. I will never forget how I felt on my first home visit day when I accompanied a Reach Out counselor who, once a week, visits patients in their homes to check on their medication adherence. We walked through a village into the slums and entered a "house," a tiny room that had a sheet dividing a living area/kitchen/laundry room space from a mattress in the back room, where an abandoned woman and her five children lived, all of whom are HIV-positive. While sitting in their house on their only piece of real furniture, looking at their walls made of cardboard and insect-covered floors, I listened to the woman's story about how her husband left her after 20 years of marriage to raise her five children. There is no way to describe

the despair in her eyes and the tremor in her voice, the direct reflections of the agony and pain incurred by this woman who constantly cares for her HIV positive family. At one point, the woman picked up four mini-bananas and brought them over to me. She proceeded to kneel in front of me and wash my hands in a basin of water that she had to walk a quarter of a mile to retrieve. She then continued to sit in front of me while I ate the only food present in her household. She continued to thank me for coming, and her hospitality and gratitude moved me to tears as we exited the house.

After I heard her moving story, I felt a tinge of guilt because this woman saw me, an American, as representation of the hope she has for her children's future and the fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda. As a citizen of one of the most powerful countries in the world, I saw in that woman's eyes the hope that resounds in so many other human beings who rely on countries like the United States to hear to their problems and answer with aid. The thirty minutes I spent in that woman's house were probably thirty of the most moving moments in my life. Seeing despair turn to hope and being able to better understand the problems faced by the average citizen of Uganda has inspired me to be part of global healthcare aid in some capacity. Although I went on this trip hoping that, while in Uganda, I would decide on a "life plan" and choose a career, I instead developed a deeper passion for the healthcare industry, an industry with the capacity to do so much for so many. Although I am still unsure of my role in the healthcare industry, the passion that will fuel whatever job or adventure on which I choose to embark is a direct result of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund and the money I was given to fund my trip to Kampala. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to go and cannot thank those individuals enough who made my trip possible.

Courtney Corcoran Kampala Project Uganda



Sara Crow
Kampala Project

With the generous help of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I was able to travel to Kampala, Uganda for the month of May and engage in HIV/AIDS service. I was a participant of the Kampala Project and worked at a place called Meeting Point in the Namuwongo district of the city. A trip to East Africa comes with a large price tag. Without the funding I received, I would not have been able to afford my trip or partake in the program. I cannot express how grateful I am for the financial assistance I received. While I anticipated going to Kampala and participating in HIV/AIDS work, I never thought I would return with such a developed perspective on the disparities surrounding access to healthcare worldwide.

During my time in Kampala, I lived with 13 other Vanderbilt undergraduate students. We all worked at various sites throughout the city. However, all of these sites shared a common thread, combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While all of the other students worked at a primary school, satellite clinics, or Mulago the public hospital, I received a rather unique site placement. I, along with another Vanderbilt student, volunteered at Meeting Point (MP) on the southeastern edge of the city. It is hard to sum up MP in one or two words because it provides so many services to the surrounding community. The assistance MP provides includes adherence counseling; home visits to their HIV positive clients; a welcome home for 40 AIDS orphans; vocational education for older children who never received any formal education; and primary level education to local children. They also supplied food to many of their clients until the resources they received from the World Food Program (WFP) were cut due to the need in the Northern region of the country. Obviously, they cover quite a bit of ground.

Part of my daily routine, actually my favorite part of the day, consisted of accompanying an HIV counselor on home visits in the communities surrounding their offices. Over the course

of four weeks, I must have visited over 70 homes and families. The complaints of most clients involved economic struggles resulting in hunger and the need for school fees for their children. (MP also sponsors hundreds of children's school fees.) I learned so much about the indirect effects the HIV/AIDS epidemic has on the lives of those affected. I met numerous parentless families where children were fending for themselves or families run by grandparents who are now responsible for multiple generations of children. I often met women left caring for as many as eight children on their own due to abandonment. (Uganda has the third highest birthrate in the world with a fertility rate of 6.6 children per woman, so large families are the norm.) It was not until I visited a woman named Miriam on my third day of home visits that I saw firsthand the devastating effect HIV/AIDS could have on a person physically.

Miriam is a woman in her mid-twenties who is HIV positive and has developed tuberculosis because of her weakened immune system. She has been taking both antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and TB medication for the last four months. The combination of ARVs and TB meds has had a significant effect on her mobility and strength. When I visited Miriam, she could only sit up in her bed and her entire collarbone and all her ribs were visible. The combination of both powerful medications has resulted in peripheral neuropathy (paralysis) on the left side of Miriam's body and she said she could feel the right side of her body succumbing to paralysis as well. Sitting up took nearly all of her energy. She knew she needed to get to the hospital because of her weakened state, fever, and because her lungs were filled with fluid. Unfortunately, she did not have money for transport or any phone credit to call a MP counselor (keep in mind, transport to the hospital would cost roughly **5 USD** and a phone call **20 cents**). She simply had to wait for someone to visit her. Luckily, the day after our visit the staff arranged for Miriam to go to the hospital to receive care.

While Miriam was the first of many HIV/AIDS patients I met who were suffering a great deal physically, there was a common thread connecting all of their situations- a lack of access to care due to physical and economic barriers. Without the help of the MP counselors and community workers, it is unlikely that many of their clients would be able to access the care they need. While numerous HIV/AIDS programs throughout Kampala provide free clinical services and medications, what good are they if the services are not accessible? This issue of access does not pervade only the developing world. US residents of urban areas with poor public transportation systems or of scattered rural areas also experience difficulties accessing care. Citizens of both countries face varying levels of economic struggles to receive healthcare services as well. An HIV test at one of the private hospitals in Kampala costs 20,000 Ugandan shillings (roughly 9.50 USD), but the average Ugandan makes less than 30 USD each week. If the choices are getting an HIV test or feeding their children, which do you think they will choose? Luckily, MP has worked to overcome both of these barriers by getting out into the communities and ensuring their clients can gain access to the services and care they need.

While the US healthcare system is anything but perfect, my time in Uganda made me appreciate our system as broken as it may be. The battle against HIV/AIDS in Uganda is one of the continent's greatest successes with a national infection rate of "only" 5.4%. Rates, however, are increasing and experts are working to understand why. While I can do a fair bit of complaining about the cracks and flaws of our system, witnessing the healthcare struggles experienced by those in the developing world has definitely given me a new perspective as to how lucky I am to have access to the 37th best healthcare system in the world. (Uganda is ranked 149th out of 190 by the WHO.) Before I left, I received many comments that implied there was no need to work abroad with all of the problems that persist our healthcare system. After

working in Uganda, my response is simply that there is no comparison. I hope that through continued service and learning at Vanderbilt, I will be able to help more people like Miriam and continue to learn from them. Again, I am sincerely grateful for the support from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund without which this experience would not have been possible.

Kashia Curry
VISAGE Cape Town

The funds allowed me to stay in South Africa for a month while working alongside a student organization by the name of SHAWCO at the University of Cape Town where my classmates and I worked in a colored township by the name of Manenberg. For the first two weeks of the program I was paired up with my adult IT learner, Rohanne, and taught her how to use a computer for the very first time. We covered everything from what a computer is, to how to use programs such as Microsoft Word and to navigate the internet and set up an email account. Basic skills like these made Rohanne more marketable and opened up different job opportunities allowing her to perform simple tasks in a more efficient way, such as writing a letter, or communicating via email. This program also helped Rohanne overcome her fear of the unknown and familiarize herself with modern technology.

By working with Rohanne I got the opportunity to meet a strong, self sufficient woman who was happy and proud of her work, life and family. As a mother, she encouraged education and the church on her sons, to keep them from getting involved with the wrong people or organizations, which in a gang ridden town proved to be a difficult task. Through our trainings I got to meet a great woman who would always give me advice on everything from boys to my studies and never leaving my house with wet hair. She told me the importance of women being able to define themselves and achieve their goals without letting obstacles such as men or pregnancy get in the way of a career. In a country with the highest rape statistics, women in South Africa have little voice in society. Women often are abused at home by family members, neighbors or even partners, since their consent to sex holds no weight. The government's lack of

involvement in many townships such as Manenberg allows for these heinous crimes towards women to occur without any form of justice. The law states that rape is illegal but most of the rapes aren't reported, and out of the few that are little to none actually make it to trial. Coming into this country knowing all these facts I was blown away to meet a woman that was as independent and proud as Rohanne was. As a security guard, she was a woman with a backbone and a voice and was dedicated to making Manenberg a better, safer township. My jaw would drop at the stories she would tell me of scolding gangsters in the middle of their turf wars or feuds as I thought nothing could intimidate her. Her bravery and passion for ensuring the safety of her community and family was very admirable and I consider myself privileged to have had the opportunity to meet such an inspiring woman.

For the last two weeks, I was placed in a group with four 6th grade learners: Mieskah, Nikita, Shanique and Donica, and worked as their tutor in Mathematics and English. The main purpose of this program was to help these kids with their academic weaknesses, and keep them doing something constructive during their winter break. The program was optional and occurred during the students' winter break for a period of two weeks total, from 1pm to 4pm each day. Through this program my learners got an opportunity to meet and interact with me—a girl of color just like them that worked her way from public schools to a great, private university through diligence and support. I got the chance to be a role model to girls that looked up to me from everything to my pre med goals, to my hairstyles and shoes.

I remember the very first day like it was yesterday. We introduced ourselves and began the first worksheet which was on speed, distance and the importance of different

speed limits in different areas. Within the first few minutes I could already spot one of the main faults of the South African education system—the lack of comprehension. My students were obsessed with answers and once they would land at a proper guess, they would move on to the next question. There was no problem solving involved and whenever I began to explain how to solve the problem and why it is solved a certain way my words would go in through one ear and right out the other. My students also lacked the ability to understand what the word problems asked without me restating or simplifying the question for them first. This resulted in them memorizing things without understanding why you use a certain method for each problem. They would mix and match methods until arriving at the answer instead of taking the question apart, thinking about it, using the clues and deciding which method would work best.

As we returned to our dorms from our first day of teaching I felt frustrated and a bit hopeless. I knew that comprehensive skills didn't develop overnight and they are something that kids must be consistently taught from a very young age. Their overcrowded schools and overworked teachers had resulted in students that had grown accustomed to memorizing their way through school and tests instead of understanding. A big problem in South Africa, one similar to that of the U.S, is that students in these poorly funded government schools excel in primary and secondary school and even make it to college, but after a year or even semester fall behind and eventually drop out. Until the quality of education improves and analytical skills are taught I knew that my students were going to face this same fate because the two weeks of tutoring can not save them from the many years they have left in this neglectful school system. As though these conditions don't make it hard enough, my students have a lot of responsibilities at home,

as statistics state that 70% of households in South Africa are run with a single parent aided by their eldest child. Many of the students we tutored had younger siblings to look after and a lot of housework to be done that studying became less of a priority. With the financial pressures and the cost of school supplies, a good amount of kids drop out to join the workforce, take care of their younger siblings, or turn to crime as a source of income. Facing these facts and challenges I knew that I had to do everything in my power in these two weeks to talk to these kids about the importance of education.

The initial goal of this program was to keep the kids off the streets for two weeks, three hours a day, and help them academically in their weak spots so that they could excel more in school. Realizing the little time I had with my girls and all the problems within the education system I decided to focus more on why education is important and the many different doors and opportunities that education can open. I did this through sharing my story on how I went to public school my whole life before Vanderbilt, so I knew a lot of the challenges they were facing—limited resources, careless teachers, over crowdedness, etc. Once I opened up, it seemed that my whole teaching experience began to brighten up as the students began to see me less and less as an outsider and more as one of their own. By telling them about my life I disproved a lot of the preconceived thoughts my students had about me and realized that we were very similar people. From that day on my students listened to every word that came out of my mouth. Whether I was explaining how to solve a math problem, or telling them to study extra hard my words began to have meaning as my students began to see themselves through me. They saw me as a living result of how hard work, despite obstacles and shortcomings can eventually pay off, despite the color of your skin, or the economic standing of your

family. This allowed them to begin to see the many powerful effects and outcomes an education can bring.

My month in Cape Town working with Rohanne and my four girls was the most amazing month of my life so far. Building friendships with the people of Manenberg and working alongside the community to improve the reputation of this township is an experience that I will always treasure. I got to live in the country I spent a whole semester studying and see the conditions and situation with my very own eyes and through my wonderful time there. The funding from Nichols made this great experience of mine possible and I cannot accurately express how thankful and fortunate I truly am to have been given the chance to build the everlasting relationships I formed in Manenberg. I became part of a community thousands of miles away in which I am always welcome and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to become an honorary, active member of Manenberg.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Nichols,

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Nichols Humanitarian Funds for allowing me to be a part of VISAGE 2009. Words cannot express how thankful I am of the funding that made this amazing experience possible. Meeting and interacting with the Manenberg community made me feel like I found a second home. Never had I met a town so sweet and welcoming of people from the other side of the world. Working with the 6th and 7th graders gave me a chance to interact with South Africa's future and help them mold and shape themselves in a positive way. I got to see the many negative results colonization and apartheid have had on this country. From the lack of respect for women and children to the destroyed family structure that apartheid created with its authoritarianism. The main issue in my kids' lives is that most of them didn't have the support of their family or anyone. Going to school is a decision they made and they have no one to rely on when it comes to questions and ensuring that they study as much as possible. Without a support system, education and other challenges in life are very hard to cope with and I am happy that through this program I have formed a friendship and become a support for my girls. Even though I am miles away I am keeping in contact with the community through emails and packages making sure my kids know that I am here for them and that our relationships, as long distance as they may be, will never come to an end. Thank you for giving me the chance to extend my network and meet amazing people whose community will always have a place for me. Thank You.

Kashia Curry



ME and some of the girls from the neighborhood and school



Mieska, Shanique, me and Nikita on our last day I bought us all fly shades!



The staff that volunteered to work with us in the program in front of the mural we all help paint. "Manenberg is changing for the good!"

Michelle Eckland
EDUC 2690 Cape Town

I am so thankful for the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. Through their help I was able to be a part of EDUC 2690—a class that traveled to South Africa over spring break and restocked a library. I never imagined that we would bring nearly 1,000lbs worth of books with us. Once we arrived at the school I realized why we brought so many books! Manenburg Primary had not received any new books in over 30 years; that means that the students still thought that Pluto was a planet! I can't even imagine all of the other misinformation that the students were reading.

There were only eight teachers at Manenburg primary and there were nearly 800 students. I could not imagine trying to control a classroom with that many students. I also thought about how there must be students that have learning difficulties and are basically set up to fail as the teacher does not have any time for individualized instruction. Amazingly, in a school that large, the children all seemed to be well behaved. They walked in straight lines, were quiet in their classrooms, and were very obedient when they saw their principal.

I think the funniest thing was seeing their amazement at Amy Kate's blonde hair. Amy Kate was one of my classmates and she was one of the few blondes on the trip. At first we thought that they really liked her as people kept coming up to her and wanting pictures, but then we realized that it was mostly because she had blonde hair.

It was interesting to see how all of the people in Manenburg focused on the present. People understood the injustices that occurred in the past, but they were proud at how far they have come. As a result of the attitude of the people of South Africa, I was able to meet many inspirational people. A former prisoner of Robben Island taught us

“each one, teach one,” meaning that we all have the power to change the world through just helping one person. Rita, a woman who built a peace garden on a former gang stomping ground said that “rocks lead to bullets and bullets lead to the grave.” She talked about all of the hate and crime that used to be in Manenburg and how she is doing her part to hopefully change the area.

I never imagined that in South Africa I would get a sister; I’ve always wanted a sister! When we went to the school for the first time we got to meet all of the kids. When we introduced ourselves to a group of students they laughed when I said my name. I asked them what was so funny and they said, “we have a friend named Michelle, she’s in the 6th grade and she’s dating a boy in 7th.” I was trying to hold back my laughter as I remembered how big of a deal it was to date someone that is in a grade higher than you. Later that day we were hanging out with more kids and a group of girls came over and introduced themselves. One of them was named Michelle, so I asked, “are you in the sixth grade?” She said yes, so I asked, “are you dating a boy in seventh?” She laughed and said, “yes, I am in the sixth grade but I am not dating anyone (with a huge grin on her face).” For the rest of the day she locked her arm in mine and introduced me to all of her friends as, “this is my sister.” The next day when we returned to the school I didn’t see her, but on the last day as we got off of the van one of the students in my class told me that someone was asking about me. I got off of the van and listened to her scream “sister, sister” and then she pointed at me and told all of her friends that I was her sister. I will always remember her smiling face and the way that she would say sister. Not to mention the time that she tried to teach me Afrikaans and I failed miserably.

One of the hardest things for me to deal with while in Manenburg was the thought

of the future for the children of Manenburg. I would look at them one moment and see adorable young children who just wanted to hug you and take pictures. The next minute I would see them throwing gang signs at one another. I realized how hard life is for these kids and how they are never really given a chance. Nearly all of the kids were born into the township in Manenburg and the majority of them will never be able to leave. It's tough to realize that a lot of them will be in gangs or get AIDS or other communicable diseases. All of these things could be prevented if these kids were even given the slightest chance.

Through this experience I learned that it's not what you have that matters but it's what you do with what you get. So many of the people in Manenburg had so little and yet they were still able to help others. People there would take the absolute worst circumstance and make it into a learning experience. They allowed the past to remain the past—something that they would look back upon but not something that they would resent. I will never forget the messages from the people of Manenburg, the beauty of South Africa, and all of the children at Manenburg Primary.



Michelle Eckland

EDUC 2690

South Africa



Melanie Erb
Center on Violence and Recovery, New York

1. Use of Funds

I used my Nichols Humanitarian Fund Prize to volunteer for ten weeks at the Center on Violence and Recovery in New York City. Funds were used to furnish housing, transportation, and groceries in Manhattan.

While at the Center, I worked on two projects. The first was federal grant-writing for an experimental, federally-funded domestic violence treatment program. Using data collected by the Center, I wrote the qualitative section of the “A Comparison Study of Batterer Intervention and Restorative Justice Programs for Domestic Violence Offenders.” This study compared rates and severity of domestic violence among Hispanics living in Santa Cruz County, AZ who were court-mandated to traditional batterers’ intervention programs (BIPs) and alternative dispute (restorative justice) resolution counseling respectively. The purpose of the report was to tease out factors contributing to domestic violence and discern which program better addressed those causes. In the coming weeks, the complete report will be sent to federal domestic violence legislators who will determine whether the experimental justice program should be expanded outside Santa Cruz County, AZ.

In conjunction with my grant-writing, I attended a conference at Cardozo School of Law. This conference, entitled “One Size Does Not Fit All: Exploring Diverse Approaches to Working with Abusive Partners,” educated practitioners and policymakers about current research on domestic violence. The conference consisted of panel discussions with researchers representing various schools of thought on domestic violence prevention.

My second project investigated the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust trauma (aka “secondary posttraumatic stress disorder” / SPTSD). The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effects of genocides (such as, but not limited to the Holocaust) not only on survivors, but also on children of survivors (“the second generation”), children of perpetrators, and the perpetrators of the violence. In addition to evaluating the effects of SPTSD, I researched how family group therapy can treat the condition. While at the Center, I familiarized myself with current scholarship and began writing a research article. In the coming weeks, I will begin the peer-review process to have the article published in a research journal.

While the SPTSD article can stand on its own, it also furthers the work being done by my sponsor, Dr. Linda Mills of New York University. The publishing of my article will coincide with the release of her film “Truth be Told” about the aftereffects of the Holocaust in Austria. Dr. Mills’ film will be released in November to commemorate the anniversary of Kristallnacht, before being entered in the Sun Dance Film Festival.

2. Knowledge Gained

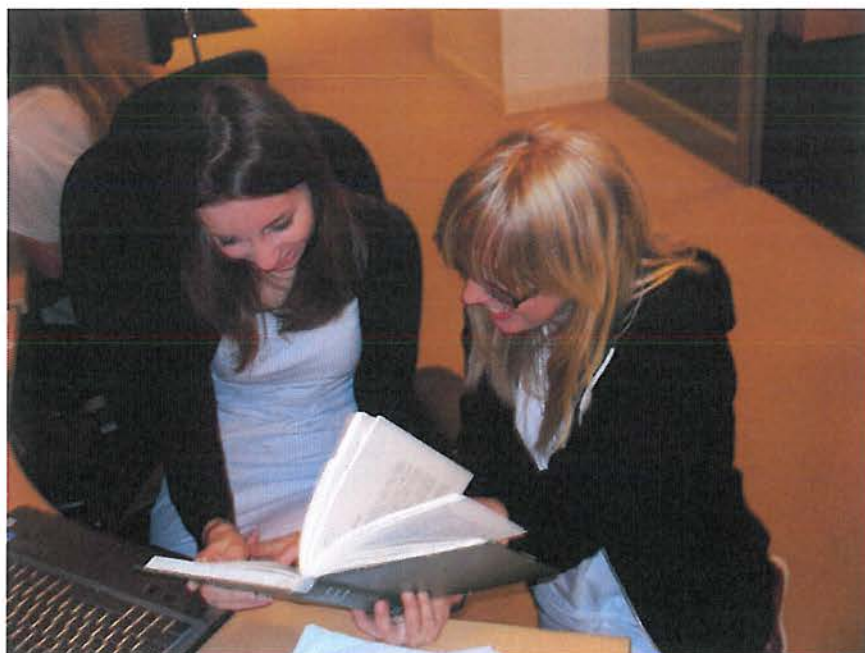
When writing the qualitative report, I increased my knowledge of restorative justice and the range of strategies for combating domestic violence. I had previously gained theoretical research on this subject through a Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Project (VUSRP) grant, but I didn’t know much about the practical application of alternative dispute resolution ideas.

In addition to furthering my knowledge of restorative justice, the comparison study introduced me to qualitative methodology. Since I was a History and Spanish major at Vanderbilt, I didn’t have much previous exposure to sociological methods. However, this project trained me to use the Grounded Theory Method of qualitative research and sociological terminology.

My second project was also highly educational. In researching intergenerational transmission of trauma and the legacy of the Austrian Holocaust, I learned of the profound repercussions genocides have on multiple generations of victims and perpetrators. While signs of trauma are most acute among survivors, the second and third generation may mirror the posttraumatic stress symptoms of the original victims. This secondary posttraumatic stress manifests itself in nightmares, inherited fear of objects associated with the Holocaust (such as dogs, authority figures, and uniforms), survivors’ guilt, and irrational fears. In addition to experiencing the same symptoms as their parents, the second generation may develop negative behaviors in response to their parents’ way of coping with the trauma. For example, parents who have lost children or have struggled to reestablish themselves economically after genocide may become overly protective and place undue demands on children born after genocide. Because they feel guilty about disappointing their parents—who have already suffered so much—the second generation feels obligated to embody all of all their parents’ unrealized hopes and desires. As a result, the second generation suffers from disproportionately high incidents of chronic stress and low self-esteem.



Center on Violence and Recovery interns: Melissa (NYU), Melanie (Vanderbilt), and Mika (NYU)



Doing a little research...

Matthew Paul Farina
VISAGE Costa Rica

Traveling to Costa Rica sounds like a vacation to the average American. However, following VISAGE guidelines, we as Vanderbilt students engaged the communities through service and learning to grasp a new perspective. The trip consisted of staying in Monteverde (the eco-tourism Mecca of Central America), Volcan Arenal, San Jose, and Samara (a secluded beach on the pacific). In each region, we engaged in service activities and learned about the communities and regional differences. The impactful experience holds as a marker in my memory of freshman year, making the end unforgettable. Living in another country, providing the community with services otherwise negated, and discovering a different way of living, Costa Rica became a platform for personal growth and development.

At the first stop of the trip, in Monteverde, we lived with homestay families and participated in daily service activities. We helped an impoverished man with his coffee farming, painted an aqueduct, and built green walkways. We got to see how free trade agreements affect farmers in Central America, and the problems associated with large coffee corporations. We also learned about the coffee process, the living standards of farmer's families, and the benefits from buying directly. While painting the aqueducts may not seem like a beneficial service project, it helped to build bonds between group members in order to accomplish the other projects that came. The success of the town's tourism industry depends on the presentable status of the city, and the continuation of the services. By assisting the water management branch, the city officials would be able to work on other issues to enhance the services of the city. The services we provided to the city's infrastructure, along with the conservation leagues, have left behind an idea of responsibility and universal concern.

Throughout the rest of the trip, we traveled to different areas, learning more about Costa Rican society and the role of tourism. The recent downturn in the tourism industry showed the huge amount of reliance the economy has on United States' appetite for traveling. One of the most interesting things we were able to experience was speaking with the leader from the organization responsible for setting up private-public partnerships. In a classroom setting, the group had an open discussion on the social ills affecting the local people. One of the social programs discussed was universal healthcare—requiring all hospitals to assist any person that walks through their doors, regardless of income and nationality. The costs are relatively low, influencing some people to get surgeries in Costa Rica, called medical tourism. One of the main issues in the healthcare discussion was that the current mental health care policy still emphasizes archaic ideals of asylums, and hiding the people from the world. The Costa Rican people still ignore the need for mental health, focusing only on physical health.

While the trip was exhausting from start to finish, working in a group and learning about the history and culture was an experience I would not change for a lifetime. I miss the serene beauty, the long walks up the mountainside, and the awareness of sustainability. Upon returning to the United States, it became evident how little people pay attention to their wasteful habits. The trip highlighted the interconnectedness of the environment with all living things.

Nichols Family,

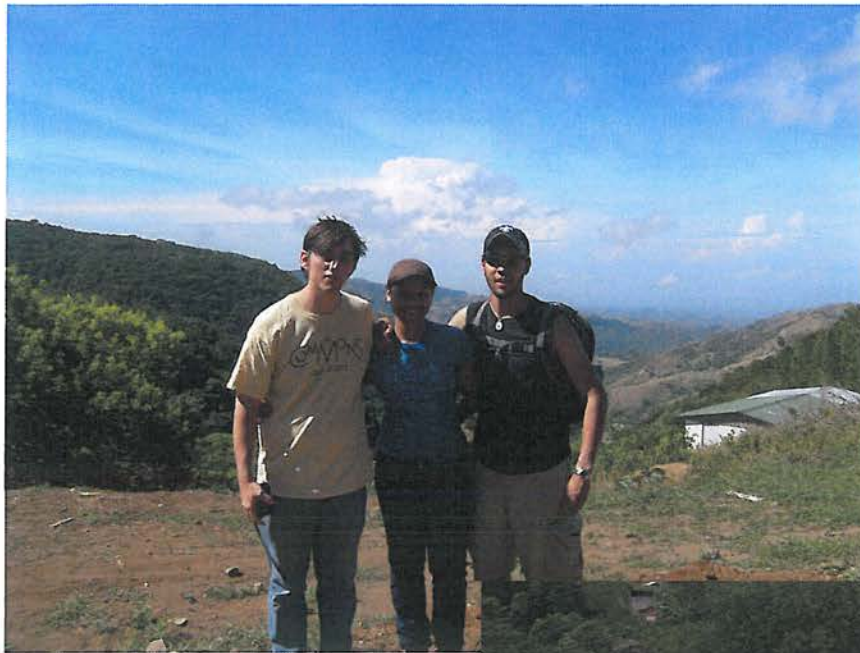
I would like to thank you for making this fund possible for me to travel and experience the epic adventure of Costa Rica. I have had an amazing time interacting with the locals, and I got to experience the actual lifestyle of the people. This is far different from any trip I have ever taken, and has truly opened my eyes to being an engaged tourist rather than just a typical traveler that learns nothing from the surrounding areas. All together this trip was amazing, and has changed me in ways I can still not explain. It has been a moment in my life that I have changed my views, grew as an individual, and experienced for the first time a truly different way of living. The experiences with the service and the project have given me the inspiration to continue traveling, to continue volunteering domestically and internationally. I remember on man once told me that people are their happiest when they are improving the lives of others, being in Costa Rica happiness truly captured my trip. The smiles and the gratitude of the people left a lasting impression. In summary, I would just like to say your fund has allowed me to experience the world around me, has changed and matured my mind, and assisted in my goal of traveling and providing assistance to those in need. For lack of words, I can never thank you enough.

Sincerely,

Matthew Paul Farina



Matthew Farina VISAGE Costa Rica



Arian Flores
VISAGE Costa Rica

This summer, from May 10 to June 6, I participated in the VISAGE program to Costa Rica. Thanks to the sponsorship and generosity of the Nichols Foundation, I had one of the greatest adventures of my life. The VISAGE program to Costa Rica was my first trip outside of the United States and will most certainly not be my last. The fund enabled me to see a world far different from the one I'm used to here in the United States. It also granted me the opportunity to meet some of the most interesting minds on the Vanderbilt campus with my same eagerness to travel and see a new country. The fund also enabled me to become aware of the lack of development and education in certain communities in Costa Rica. The amount of devastation and danger was further made aware to me after my participation in the various volunteer services engaged by my Visage group.

One of our first service sites involved the construction of a sidewalk. However, we did not build just any sidewalk, we helped construct green walkways. Green walkways are a form of sidewalks that are made within the forest to keep pedestrians off the dirt roads where many speeding dirt bikes and trucks pass by. The path we worked on was near a Quaker school that would help bring young students to and from school safely. As we lifted the heavy gravel that would be used to make the walkway and as we hammered shovels into the tough earth, passersby from the school would say hello and some even offered a helping hand. The passion Costa Ricans show towards their community is unimaginable. Coming from such a large city like New York, community coming together like this occurs only on very rare occasions and seeing the consistency of it in Costa Rica perplexed me. I could only imagine what our world would be like if everyone had the same sense of community as these people.

We eventually finished the sidewalk and moved on to our next project, which was farm work at a local coffee farm. Next to tourism, coffee makes up an essential and large part of the Costa Rican economy. In my opinion, the coffee in Costa Rica was not only important because of its role in the economy; it also has an amazing taste that can only be found in Costa Rica. A farmer we met, who was helped by the Quakers in buying his land, was a native Costa Rican from the local area. The coffee he sold was his main source of income to feed his family and support his community. To assist him, we pulled out weeds, planted seeds, and did various farming chores that were all completely new to me, being from a city. When we finished, he showed us around the neighborhood, and we made more Costa Rican friends.

After our coffee farm endeavors, we went directly to another one of our service projects—this time involving recycling paper. Being eco-friendly is as essential as stocks on Wall Street in Costa Rica. In all of our trips to all of the provinces in Costa Rica, the sense of eco-care and green friendliness is there. When interviewing a panel of women in the ecotourism business in San Jose, one of the women said, “Taking care of the natural beauty of our country is essential to keep Costa Rican society balanced.” When we visited and volunteered at the recycling plant in San Luis, the experience taught me that recycling old paper is one of the most disgusting and most rewarding things anyone can ever experience. The recycled paper was used to make handbags, notebooks, and even art. The entire group bonded that evening and we learned how a process to control waste like this is needed in the U.S, which holds the highest record for waste in the world.

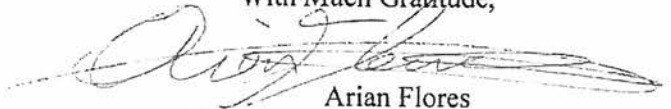
Although my visage trip consisted of many lectures, assignments, and service opportunities, the visage group and I had many fun little adventures in Costa Rica. For example, to attend our lecture in San Gerardo, we had to make a 5-kilometer hike up and then down a mountain and the cloud forest. This experience was wonderful and the sites of the

mountains and volcanoes were incredible. When we reached the San Gerardo station where we would have our lecture and stay the night, the large amount of insects frightened everyone in the group, including myself. When nightfall came, the moths in my room were annoying and uncomfortable. Fortunately, the station had a set of hammocks on the open balcony. I decided to sleep in one of them for the night. My decision was later rewarded when I rose the next morning to the sounds of the rainforest. The sun was rising next to *Volcan Arenal* and the morning fog was clearing out. I would never in my life have had this experience anywhere else. It was the first time I really appreciated nature and the environment. Coming from a city where all necessary amenities are granted to any person with an apartment, I never saw nature as an essential part of life. Its purpose and need for care all made sense to me that morning in the hammock on that balcony. This experience would have never been possible without the help of the fund and I am truly grateful for the support the Nichols fund has granted me to go on this Visage.

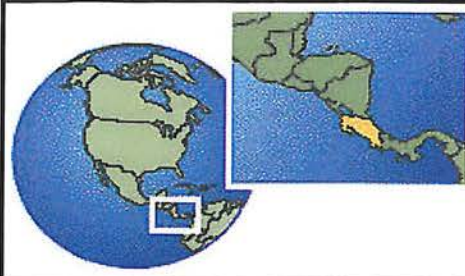
To the Nichols:

I would like to thank you for your gratitude and support for my study abroad experience this summer in Costa Rica. The experience was incredible and has encouraged me to travel and study in other countries. I can really thank you now in advance for all my future trips and voyages around the world. Without your generosity I would have never had this experience and opened my life to new possibilities. I would also like to thank you for permitting me to see and compare my culture and home in New York City to that of Costa Rica. My life will never be the same, and I have your family to thank for it. Thanks for everything.

With Much Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Arian Flores', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Arian Flores
School Of Arts and Science
Vanderbilt University



Arian Flores VISAGE Costa Rica



Catherine Garvey
VISAGE Nicaragua

Through VISAGE, I found what makes my heart sing. It was in Nicaragua that I found that one thing that I couldn't live without. It made me more joyful and provided more happiness than I have ever experienced. Yes, being in a trash dump, in 100 degree heat, covered in sweat and black 'dirt', smelling one of the worst smells that I have experienced, made me more happy and full of life than I have ever known. It fed my soul, and let my spirit explore. It took my ordinary life and transformed it into a magical adventure. Although I have participated in many service trips and had many abroad events throughout my life, my experience in Nicaragua was the greatest that I have experienced. One thing is certain, I am changed.

I learned more from VISAGE than any classroom that I have sat in, or from any 'service' trip that I have gone on. La Chureca had the biggest impact on me, and it is here that I learned so much. As I wrote in my journal,

"Chureca is exhausting. The environment makes you extremely fatigued, and the conditions exhaust your mental being too. It's harder to breath, and each time I leave there, I am covered in filth. As much as I try to see the beauty here, it is still hard. There is still trash everywhere; there is still horse poop near every step; there is still dead animal carcass in sight; and there is still a horrendous stench. It's still a city dump."

In La Chureca, I worked in the clinic, because I am planning on going to medical school. The first day we went there, the nurse, Esmo, threw a clipboard at me and told me to find out the name, age, problems, etc. of everyone in the waiting room. My Spanish improved so quickly! Other days, I sterilized the office, watched the doctor

interact with patients' help file "charts," and filled prescriptions (literally!). Let's start with the "charts." Esmo handed me about 6 or 7 inches of paper—all single sheets...all individual visits to the clinic. These were even from last year! This is the most dysfunctional system I have seen in some quite some time. No computers; no "charts" as we had when I was a kid. I also thought it was interesting the average age of a mother was so young. When Nicas found out that I was 19 and without a child, they were shocked. Without the first module of the VISAGE class, I would not understand why their culture is this way. La Chureca had a huge impact on me—and now, I want to dedicate my life to Nicaragua. As I wrote in my journal one day,

“It is here in Chureca that I saw the most beautiful people that I have ever seen. Yes, I saw beauty in the middle of a trash dump. I am beginning to see the splendor that Christ sees in his children of Chureca. I am realizing that both of my goals are coming true: my goal of Takkun, the Hebrew word for healing the world, is starting to happen, not because I am healing the impoverished, but because they are healing me. My goal of trying to stir the world is become more real because I am impassioned.”

At NicaHOPE, an NGO outside of the dump, I helped teach school. It was a great struggle for my eyes. From my experience tutoring in the states, I know that children often don't want to be there. They don't really care to learn, and they don't take advantage of the opportunities; but in Nicaragua, they kids begged for my help. They asked if I could meet after class because they wanted more help with math. What broke my heart is that these kids don't have opportunities—not like in the states at least. For many of these kids, tutoring is the only school they get. NicaHope is giving these kids an

opportunity unique to children of La Chureca.

But it is still hard; I remember one day in particular. I was asked to work with a 16 year old boy. We were going over numbers—100...101...102...all the way to 200. This took us over an hour because he didn't know them. He was 16 years old. This is difficult. With that said, kids that I worked with pick up on concepts more quickly than I am used to. Once I showed this boy how to do it, he asked his teacher if he could write them all out again. As the boy did, he only asked for my help on one number. I don't know if I could have ever gotten a 99% on anything that someone showed me one time.

At 'the Land,' I had the least amount of visible, tangible service, but I think that it was there that I learned one of the greatest services one can give: love. As one of my mentors says, "When you walk with someone you're saying to them, 'I am with you.' We can walk in hell and not have fear." To sit and listen and talk with people is one of the greatest services that anyone can give. It says that they matter, and that I love them.

It is through this service and learning that I am a greater person. During my trip, I wrote:

"We've experienced pain, fear, aching, joy, happiness, laughter, and a lot of opposite emotions. It is only in the most depressing and gloomy places that I found so much happiness, love, and joy. But what have I learned? What will I do with what I've learned? One thing is for certain: I am changed. I have become family with many people in under a month. I've learned that the most beautiful people I know live in the worst slum that I have ever seen. I've learned the importance of laughter, the power of words, the influence of encouragement, and the great emotion of having someone care. I've learned that a huge hole of

effectiveness is present when I do service without learning, or when I learn without service. I've learned that changing the world is possible. I've learned the importance of stillness, caring about others, hugs, and love. I've learned how many more opportunities there are in the states compared to those that many kids have in Nicaragua.

So what now? What do I do when I go back to the states tomorrow? Or in a month when I still long to be here with Miguel in Chureca or Neyse at NicaHOPE or Juan Carlos in the Land? I don't have all the answers, but I think change will happen because it is here that I have found passion. I've learned of a deeper and more extreme passion than I have ever known before. And this *has* stirred my world."

VISAGE changed me—just ask my friends and parents. I look at a plastic bottle and see it as food, community, power, shelter, clothing, but never garbage. It is not just plastic anymore—it's Unburto; it's Katy; it's even little Carlito. It is hard not to change after spending a month in a pile of trash, filled with doglegs, broken glass, used syringes, dead cows, plastic, paper, etc. I now have experienced "real" learning—not just memorizing information and regurgitating it out on a test. I am more confident in my desires to work with NGOs. I have a deeply rooted connection with the other Vanderbilt students that participated. I have gained friends for a lifetime because our souls connected. We all look at the world and are pained by it. We all refused to ignore it. As Ted Kennedy once said, "some people look at the world and ask why. Others look at the world as it could be and ask why not." We are the "why nots." From 8 hour hikes to running down a volcano, from throwing a fiesta for the Churequeros to being rushed by

bulls, from journaling to helping administer a vaccine, I have learned so much and I have been changed. Although I am still digesting my experience, one thing is for certain: I need Nicaragua far more than it needs me.

Catherine Garvey

VISAGE

Nicaragua



Keionna Grant
VISAGE Nicaragua

The end of our trip to Nicaragua was definitely a sad experience for me and my group members. When we initially arrived there, we had to adjust to the new culture that we were suddenly submerged in, and were just beginning to meet the people and children that we worked with throughout the month. The first week seemed to last for a very long time, but Quinta Airen, which was the first place that we lived in really allowed for me and my group members to bond and get to know each other. In Quinta Airen, we all lived together in one big bunk-room. If we had not had that opportunity to bond with each other before moving into Cantera, our place of residence for the remainder of the trip, I believe that the month would have been much different.

Overall, our month in Nicaragua was a continuous learning process in addition to our service. We learned so much about the people and their culture, deeper than the information that we studied in class. During the semester, our books and articles were the only resources we had to make references about the culture there aside from our visitors. Being that we had spent a month there, we definitely left with having been exposed to much more than we could have from articles and visitors alone. Our interactions with the people, our home stay, and our work at NicaHope, Juntos Contigo, and the Preschool were all great opportunities.

Although we only stayed in Nicaragua for a month, our time there was definitely worthwhile. While we benefited from the relationships that we formed and new knowledge we attained, our presence there had also been beneficial to people that we met. For example, although we had only been there for a short amount of time, the help that my group member, Becky, and I provided at the preschool made the teachers' lives a

little bit easier, and we were able to apply our own methods of teaching for the kids. The experience was certainly mutually beneficial.

In addition to our service work, the trips we had there were amazing. Before this program, I had never been in Central America, climbed a volcano, been in a bat cave, or gone kayaking. I really liked this aspect because it made the VISAGE program even more diverse. Coming into this program, for some reason I did not expect to go on all of these trips, so they actually turned out to be a delightful surprise.

Hopefully, now that we are back in the states, we will be able to implement the ideas that we had been brainstorming during our weeks there. We were really excited to hear that our NicaHope jewelry purchases allowed for the kids to finally get paid a reasonable amount, which they haven't really received in a while. We hope that the initiative to sell NicaHope jewelry back at Vanderbilt will really be successful in order to obtain more profit for the kids. Our group also hopes to form a collective VISAGE Nicaragua network that can be expanded each year, in order to gain strength in numbers to hopefully find the resources to help NicaAyuda, a new and upcoming organization run by college students in Nicaragua. Also, our voices alone and willingness to advocate for VISAGE and the organizations that we have worked with can make a big difference. Thanks to the Nichols Fund, I had the opportunity to participate in this fabulous program, and hope that the Fund will continue to aid other students in programs like VISAGE.

Keionna Grant

VISAGE

Nicaragua



Ellington Griffin
VISAGE Cape Town

VISAGE is a program in which Vanderbilt students partner with both the University of Cape Town and the Manenberg township. The program had two components, a service component and an academic component. In the mornings, our group attended lectures presented by various professors, government officials, and community social workers. During the afternoons, we served the Manenberg township. The first two weeks of our stay in Cape Town, we taught adult learners of various skill levels how to use computers. The second two weeks, we worked with children in the community. We were there during Cape Town's winter break, a time when many students in the township get into trouble in the township because of their lack of activity. In addition, many of the students "learn" in classrooms with 40 other students with teachers who often fail to attend class. Our program for the holiday not only daily engaged students, but engaged with students in groups of two or three, which allowed us to help fill the gaps in their learning. Though the program had an academic base, the service made the strongest impression on me. While I will likely confuse lecturers and their lectures as time progresses, I will never be able to get the kids I worked with out of my mind; I will never stop wondering about their well-being, and will never stop hoping in their futures.

In the townships, I learned a great deal about the effect disease has on a community. We went into the township of Nyanga, a community in which one in three people is infected with HIV/AIDS while we were in Cape Town. It is hard exactly to describe what we saw there and our experiences there, because the weight, the pain, the suffering of HIV/AIDS hangs heavy in the air. Yet despite that, the township was one of the few places in my life I have experienced true joy. We went to a Tuberculosis clinic in Nyanga. Tuberculosis is a huge problem in the townships for three reasons. Having such a prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the community means that a great portion of the population have compromised immune systems and are more

vulnerable to diseases. That, coupled with the ease with which Tuberculosis is transmitted, has resulted in an explosion of the disease in the community. Treating the disease is very difficult, because everyone in the township assumes that anyone going to a clinic has HIV/AIDS, so many people do not seek treatment so as to avoid the social stigma associated with being positive. Though HIV/AIDS is such a problem, few people talk about it, much less try to solve the problem, because, to be positive, renders one a virtual pariah in the community. This avoidance has led to an explosion of the disease in all of Cape Town, though prevalence rates are higher in the poor areas. The effect is devastating, as such rapidly declining populations cripple communities. In the past, I had thought HIV/AIDS was a problem easily managed. After being in Cape Town, however, I realized not only how important good health is maintaining cohesive communities, but how complicated issues of health are in such communities.

Going to Cape Town was a really difficult experience, and I honestly was not expecting it to be. I became so invested in the lives of the children I worked with. I want to know what they become in five years, ten years. Statistically speaking, though, I really will not want to know what all of them are up to in five years. I am really torn with how to put back the pieces of the broken world back together. I thought I would come to Africa and fix it. Africa has worked to fix me. I thought I would come to Africa and receive answers to all of my questions, especially the question of how I, as an individual, can make the world a better place. Africa gave me more questions.

Actually saying goodbye to the children I worked with went two ways. I had five students. One of our five students, Mekyle, was incredibly bright and was the shining star of our group. I felt like he and I had really connected. The last thing he said to me, though, was to ask me for money. When I said no, he walked away without saying goodbye, which hurt. One of our other students, a girl named Mareldia, came up to me when we were saying goodbye and said,

“Ellington, you must not cry. You must not cry,” and wiped the tears off of my cheeks. I could not stop crying thinking about all of the hopes I have for these children and the pain of not being present to help those hopes become realities. She kept telling me not to cry, and kept hugging me to try to help me stop crying. When I finally had to leave and we broke our hug, I realized she was crying too. That made leaving so much harder, because I felt like I was letting her down. I still feel like I have let her down.

Paige Harmony
VISAGE Costa Rica

For a variety of reasons, I am always leery of returning from my travels, whether they are as exotic as Costa Rica, my most recent destination, or from Zirconia, North Carolina, where I am currently employed at a summer camp. Piles of laundry beckon me to place them in their alabaster showers and then to spend hours as I place each item back in its respective drawer. More daunting is the task of re-acclimating to a former life, the life before the tropics or the days of running free in the mountains—the life that has structure and considerably fewer surprises.

But the reason I am most intimidated by returning from a trip, whether its duration was a month or a day, is the question that inevitably follows upon the return: “How was your trip?!” Ex-boyfriends and damaging childhoods aside, that question carries more baggage than anyone bargains for. It requires cognizance on the part of the storyteller that a tangent into the finer nuances of the trip might stimulate the boredom and/or annoyance of the listening party, and the knowledge that a trip such as the one that I just took to Costa Rica can never be described within the time parameters of a normal conversation.

My experience with VISAGE in Costa Rica was hands down the most meaningful journey of my young life thus far, and it would not have been possible without the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. Every single activity on the itinerary had its purpose. From planting over 300 trees in order to help prevent the extinction of the bell bird, to the group bonding sessions, every moment played its part in teaching us sustainability, the tenets and importance of ecotourism, and the importance of a strong corporate social responsibility department both in the tourism sector and beyond.

Prior to almost every service activity, including the reforestation activity and also our trail-building activity and our time with Eco-Bambu (a company that recycles paper from local

companies in Monteverde and makes new paper products from it), we learned the purpose and the importance of the activity from any number of lecturers, leaders in Monteverde, San José, and La Fortuna. Every lecture was an incredible opportunity to interact with a culture that has, more than any country, made a concerted and tangible effort to merge the usually opposing forces of development and sustainability. Every lecture put a face on sustainability, a face that was evidence that a group of determined citizens can effect change by joining sustainability and development and not by pitting these two forces against each other

While no one in our group is a CEO of large company, a high-profile corporate lawyer, or a representative from the tourist industry, the Nichols Humanitarian Fund enabled us to experience Costa Rica and its incredible efforts in sustainable development and sustainable tourism so that we can pass on our knowledge on to those people one day, or use it ourselves in our own companies and our own futures. The Nichols Humanitarian Fund will be the starting point every time we begin to talk about Costa Rica, to squeeze the fountain of knowledge that we discovered in Costa Rica into every conversation, no matter how difficult it may be to show just what our experiences there meant to us.

Dear Nichols Family,

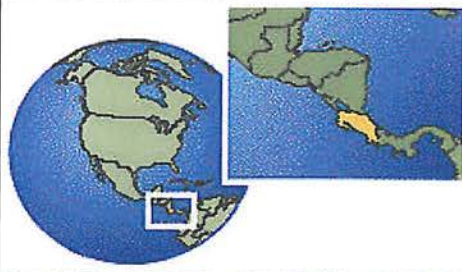
Having now been back in my home country for a little over a month, I can safely say that my experience in Costa Rica with the VISAGE program has changed my life, and it would not have been possible without the generosity of those involved with the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. I am an English major and Spanish minor who is not anticipating a job in the tourism sector, but I am also an avid traveler who now realizes that my experiences learning about sustainability and corporate social responsibility through the tourism industry in Costa Rica have become fundamental pillars in the way in which I will now approach my coming travels and my own personal efforts toward a more sustainable society.

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund, too, is a shining example of sustainability, whether it enables students to experience any of the VISAGE programs or other programs like Kampala Project: it provides a means by which students can enthusiastically pursue interests that cannot be replicated in a classroom or in a service environment here in the United States. And as long as our world has students who are willing to pursue these interests, near and far, we can work toward a more sustainable future socially, environmentally, and economically.

Thank you from one of those who hopes to create a more sustainable world.

Sincerely,

Paige Harmony



Paige Harmony VISAGE Costa Rica



Group after painting
an aqueduct with AyA
(Acueductos y alcan-
tarillados, the water
utility)



Group after building a trail in the community of Monteverde

Leslie Labruto
VISAGE Cape Town

I truly enjoy the way I look at life; it is quite different than most people's view. To most, life is the anticipation that they will wake up in the morning, throw on an outfit, complete whatever tasks they choose or have to complete, return home, go to sleep, and then start the cycle all over again. While this is an easy lifestyle to subscribe to, it lacks an element of growth. Far too often, we fall into a pattern that is restrictive, self-limiting, even inhibiting, whether we realize it or not.

Well, I have chosen to realize it. To me, life began with a skeleton. I entered the world as a frame, awaiting layers of skin to be added that would signify my growth as a young infant into a developed human with experiences, lessons, thoughts, and ideas that lay atop my framework. When I recognize one of these layers being formed before my eyes, the value of that experience is extremely profound for me. As a nineteen year old who has just returned from an adventure to Cape Town, I can assure you, another layer has been added and it may be the most substantial of all.

Of the twelve students embarking on this journey to Cape Town, I will affirm that I was indeed the most skeptical about how this experience would shape my academic and humanitarian interests. I knew I was going to have the opportunities to use my mind to think more analytically than I ever had in college. However, being an engineering major, the content of the VISAGE curriculum, both the academic and service aims, did not align with what I had decided to study at Vanderbilt. Far too often, I found myself struggling to see how social justice, education, and a service-learning trip to Cape Town to work with adults and children could ever leave a sustainable impact on my desire to be an

environmental engineer. Now, in retrospect, I can honestly say that my work as an engineer would be virtually worthless without this learning experience.

It was not long before arriving to Cape Town before I found myself at the threshold of an extremely daunting and ambitious realization. It was the realization that rural communities were in dire need of efficient energy—and at an affordable rate. It was a reality that I did not want to swallow. For my first two weeks in Cape Town, I decided to turn a blind eye towards this issue. Instead, I began investigating how flourishing organizations were adopting green energy to enhance their businesses and fulfill a sense of corporate responsibility.

It took two significant moments during this experience for me to realize how my value as an engineer was going to be increased from this experience. The first came through a self-discovery process on a bike tour in Stellenbosch. At a local vineyard we visited named Spiers, the manager mentioned that Spiers held a deep commitment to sustainable practices. I eagerly asked what had inspired Spiers to dedicate themselves to sustainability and he responded, “To be completely honest, Spiers is so wealthy that money is not even an object for our founders. Therefore, we figured, why not lead by example and adopt sustainable practices.” I immediately found myself feeling guilty. How could I have so blindly turned my eye to the people who need alternative solutions most? The excursion helped me realize that I really did not need to help green the sector that already has the resources to do so themselves. Rather, I needed to look at how I could implement energy efficient source into rural and developing communities.

Immediately, I began to explore this avenue in my final weeks. I found UCT professors who were more than willing to discuss their findings with me. I stumbled upon

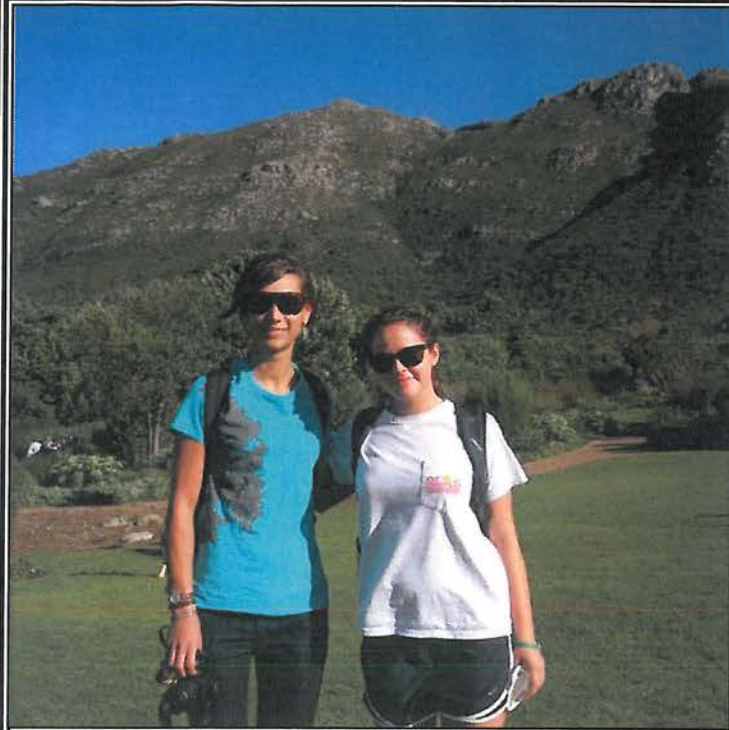
articles pertaining to greening developing regions. I even participated in Africa Energy Week, which still stands as the highlight and pinnacle of my learning career to date. At this pan-African conference, representatives from all African nations met to discuss the continent's current status of energy consumption and how they were going to consciously shape their political and social decisions to ensure a more sustainable future. However, I could not rid myself of the feeling that the knowledge content of our lectures and our service of tutoring adults and children were irrelevant to my sustained learning. I vividly remember the xenophobia lecture wondering why I was sitting through a talk that would never play an integral part in my own personal thirst for knowledge.

Thankfully, it was this very talk on xenophobia opened my eyes to how this seemingly irrelevant content knowledge was indeed critical to my development as an engineer. That night, it was revealed that humans were slaughtering other human beings over bread selling for five rand rather than seven rand. "A two rand difference?" I thought. To me it seemed so insignificant, but then my second realization came. Cost efficiency is a huge factor in the lives of people especially when 1.4 billion people globally live on less than \$1.25 a day. With the recognition of this fact, I knew that my experience in Cape Town would enable me to one day sit in a room filled with engineers and declare that we must consider the livelihood and circumstances of the people we are providing energy to.

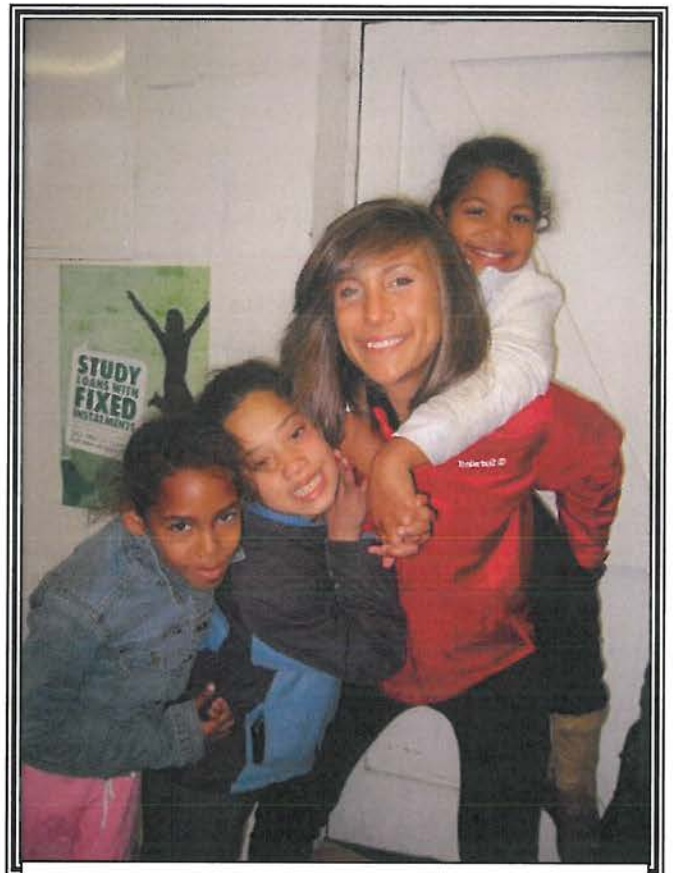
So, has this experience contributed to my sustained learning? I know that the answer is invariably and unequivocally yes. On that note, there is no way I can begin to imagine what my present and future attitude would have been towards engineering and humanity had I not gone on this journey; that easily could have been a reality had I not

been generously granted funds from the Nichols Fund. Besides the monetary relief this scholarship has provided my family and me, it has shown me so much more. This scholarship has shown me that there are groups of people that truly believe in the power of the youth. There are groups of people who recognize that my ambitions and the ambitions of my peers are not too grand or too outlandish. The Nichols Fund has motivated me to want to do more so that one day, I can help a young man or woman's ambition be realized so that the cycle of giving remains unbroken. So, to close, I thank you not only for the money to help fund my trip, but also for recognizing the many layers of skin your generosity has added and will continue to add to the members of my generation.

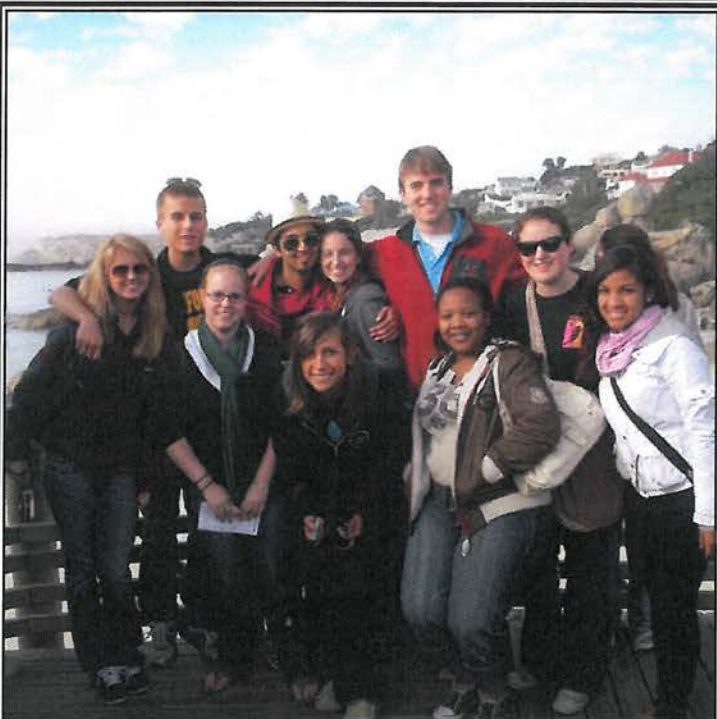
Photographs from Cape Town, South Africa



Kirstenbosch National Park: Alex Lowe and I explored the natural landscape of Cape Town to better understand the resources in South Africa



Service at Manenberg: Volunteering at Manenberg, a local Township school, was one of the most enriching experiences of my life as I was able to become a role model for young boys and girl to help them realize the importance of education



VISAGE 2009: Sightseeing at Simon's Town, a natural reserve for penguins!

Courtney Marshall
VISAGE Costa Rica

"Tourism has become a supermarket of illusions, exotic lands promising to satisfy secret desires." - Deborah McLaren

Costa Rica is considered a mecca of biodiversity and ecological marvels. Not only does the country host a full kaleidoscope of wilderness wonder, but also houses a rich, peaceful, and friendly culture. Costa Rica is considered a place to start a new life, whether by taking up permanent residency or simply getting a breath of fresh air in a temporary tourist setting. In fact, the tourism industry in Costa Rica alone attracts the most visitors in Central America and accumulates an average of \$1.9 billion dollars per year. The majority of this commerce centers around the country's utilization of their surrounding environment, namely through ecotourism, voluntourism, adventure tourism and nature tourism. In short, the country thrives on the global appreciation of its tranquil and pleasant atmosphere and its extraordinary natural world. However, Costa Rica inherently maintains a contradictory imbalance because it depends upon environmental sustainability in order to endure future economic, social, and historic survival, but still allows negligent and irresponsible tourism, which in turn is destroying the environment on which the country so depends.

Because of the Nicholas Humanitarian Fund, I had the opportunity to experience the beauty of Costa Rica from an alternant perspective than the typical two-week tourist. For example, in Monteverde, where the majority of our trip was spent, I held the valuable role of being not only a student pursuing scholarly interests, but also a participating observer of the small knit community. I lived with a homestay family, from whom I learned "dichos ticos" or Costa Rican sayings and which suitable "telenovelas" were worthy of teenage worship. "Estoy detrás del palo" was the most popular phrase escaping my lips during my stay there because of

its implied meaning, “I don’t understand.” During the day, our VISAGE group had classes about a variety subjects ranging from potable water treatment to the controversy of paving roads.

Afterwards, we partook in community service activities relating to our studies including:

building an adequate walkway along one of the dangerous and unpaved roads, so that children would have a safe place to stroll on their route to and from school; painting a faded and neglected public water tank a new shade of green; and planting about 300 trees for the Bellbird project, molding the earth and facilitating life as we worked under the guidance of teamwork and cooperation.

Personally, I discovered in this glorious cloud forest that time stood still and life was ruled by “la hora tica,” a strange cultural habit where people arrive at least two hours late to any social engagement. I found myself awake at sunrise, which for Costa Rica is roughly 5:30 in the morning. The city would already be up and moving, and the sound of the passersby, whether by car or on foot, would serve as my alarm clock. Then one glance out the window and the breath was knocked out of my chest as I witnessed the awe of pillowy clouds enveloping the mountainous landscape like a comforting blanket. I almost felt like I had been thrust into the folds of a National Geographic magazine. Who knew such vegetation and magnificence existed beyond imagination? Stepping out of my room and into the kitchen, I watched my homestay mother next to the grill with her gallon of cooking oil at the ready, about to fry up whatever delicious treat she felt like concocting that day. Her delicacies ranged from bean empanadas to fried cheese, and of course the inevitable gallo pinto (rice and beans) that is served at every meal. However, for breakfast the most invigorating aroma was that of the tropical pineapple and mango. Those fresh crisp bursts of succulent splendor are what I will always remember about Costa Rica. Well, that and the coffee. Oh the moist, rich, dark flavors that the coffee supplied.

The drink was available anytime anywhere, but the wee hours of the morning are when the coffee reigns in all its glory.

On a more academic note, our course involved many interviews and discussions with community leaders, environmentally conscious business owners, tourism corporations, and various hotel owners. For example, one interview given by Saray Barela, a leader in the business community of the popular tourist destination of La Fortuna, offered an interesting perspective about evolution of her town so heavily influenced by tourist activity. Listening to her viewpoint about the effects of tourism on the community changed my thoughts over how the concept actually shapes the lifestyles of those who depend upon it. The description she offered was somewhat unique because the collective members of La Fortuna, though perhaps not as ready for the almost instantaneous boom of foreigners thirsting for glimpses of the breathtaking Arenal volcano, had the foresight to acknowledge that tourism may only be a temporary means of income, entirely dependent on outsiders. Therefore, many people that opened hotels to house the influx of visitors also retained a second source of income through milk farms. Typically, as explained by Mrs. Barela, the woman would run the hotel, for work associated with hospitality is culturally considered feminine in nature, while the man would work all day performing “masculine duties.” Not only does this give women an opportunity to participate in a higher level of societal association, it also facilitates the motivation for women to seek out higher forms of education. Tourism offered a strong economic boost in La Fortuna society with its foreign income. On the other hand, tourism creates a cultural rift between generations as the young become more exposed to transnational culture and shed their own unique cultural identity. Saray listed aspects such as speech, dances, familial respect, religion, etc. that are all being adversely effected. Also, she introduced the concepts of drugs, crime, and prostitution that inevitably

sprout from tourist exchanges. Though these undesirable effects are somewhat of a phenomenon in conjunction with international exposure, they are nevertheless present and threatening to the community as a whole.

In relation to nature, the environmental dilemma is whether or not tourism and sustainability are inherently counterintuitive. From my experience in Costa Rica, I found travel to be beneficial for the community and the nature world as a whole, for it replaced words on a page with faces and places. The response to counteract the negative effect of tourism is tourism itself. The problem is also the remedy. The responsibility falls to individual tourists to ensure future change in the tourism industry. The public needs to witness the marvels of world in order to understand the value of what they want to defend. That face-to-face interaction is what will make the changes we wish to see in the world. Knowledge brought to and from tourist destinations provides awareness and action that will allow mankind to reach a superior level of international social justice and responsibility. This moment is an evolutionary milestone, for civilization has the opportunity now to redress the global degradation it is responsible for and respond proactively to making the necessary transitions and alterations of current system dynamics. In short, the progressive visions of the future globalization and modernization must evolve to include sustainability. My hope is that as students dedicated to understanding, we are a driving force and through people like us, the goal of sustainability can be embraced and proliferated.

Dear Nichols Family,

I want to express my appreciation for your generosity and kindness in support of my study abroad experience in Costa Rica. I walked away a changed person with a more enlightened sense of my surroundings and a greater value of sustainability and personal responsibility. Your assistance means so much to me because this memorable, life-altering event would not have been possible without your help. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Sincerely,
Courtney Marshall

Courtney Marshall

VISAGE

Costa Rica



Nichols Humanitarian Fund Report

New Delhi, India

March 2009 – April 2009

Tyler M. Sanchez

Vanderbilt University

5/25/09

Executive Summary:

I've always tried to live a life of purpose and have sought meaning in every new experience. Choosing to spend my one month spring break working for a non-profit in India that I contacted on my own, while my fellow study abroad friends toured Prague, Rome, and Vienna, was one of the greatest risks I've ever taken. Aside from the language barrier, the cultural barrier, and the fact that I knew no one in India, my task of designing a training manual for new Business Associates (300 people in the 500 person company) was a tall order. The non-profit, International Development Enterprises India (IDEI), specializes in developing and marketing innovative and low-cost irrigation systems to rural farmers who otherwise have no sustainable way of irrigating their crops outside of the monsoon season. Living locally in a poverty-stricken area with no hot water, showerheads, or air conditioning and with sweltering daily humidity, I certainly struggled at first. But after experiencing great kindness and witnessing the daily struggles faced by people in India, it gave me tremendous perspective and an unending gratitude for my own blessings. What began as my greatest life risk turned into my greatest life gift and has shaped my global perspective in a way that travelling to Prague never could have.

First Impressions of India:

"This morning I had the most exhilarating if not terrifying experience ever in my life. Rajpreet, a nice lady working at the IDEI office who has been helping me settle in and find my way around Delhi told me to meet her at the nearby bus stop this morning so that she could help me find my way to the office. So at 9 a.m. sharp, I waited for her there, only to see her appear a few minutes later wearing a helmet and motioning me towards her. I strolled up to her "two-wheeler" (read: Indian motorcycle) and she told me to jump on. Instinctively, I listened, and awkwardly I hopped on, but it was not without gripping the seat with all my might. This was before we even began moving. I had never ridden a motorcycle before and since the rumors about Delhi traffic had proved to be true, I was rightly primed with fear. It was terrifying. Within seconds we were off, zooming through Delhi traffic, weaving in between autoricksaws, cars, bicycles, people, and other vehicles and flying by them. The wind was screaming in my face as I looked on past Rajpreet to the busy street in front. While I did have a helmet on, about every 10 feet or so there was a pothole or some other bump or break in the road that would cause the whole vehicle to bounce up in the air a bit and for a split second I was airborne and it felt like I was just going to fly off the bike. Fortunately, my now white-knuckled hands prevented that from happening. Soon I began to relax a bit, though I think I held my breath the entire seven minute ride. I could swear though that the journey took at least twenty minutes. Part of me didn't actually want it to end. I felt like the young Che Guevara in *The Motorcycle Diaries* as he and his doctor friend are driving across South America on a motorcycle witnessing the widespread poverty around them. I felt like a silent observer watching a movie about the real India play in front of my eyes. I was

completely aware of everything around me, and although we averaged only 40 mph (with a high of 65 mph), everything felt as if it were going in slow motion. My eyes would latch onto a scene of a 5-year old barefooted boy walking away from me down a dirt road with a doll in his hand, and then I would notice a black spotted goat tied to wooden stake right on the side of the street, and right then Rajpreet would make a move past another vehicle and we would zoom ahead onto another equally unnatural scene. Often I will imagine music playing in the background of important and defining moments in my life, almost as if my life were a movie playing in real-time and I can sit back and watch it. Anyway, as we were speeding along, I could hear the song "Hard Sun" by Eddie Vedder from the movie *Into The Wild* playing in the background as we sped by a blurry scene of barefooted people, slumdog housing, vocal street vendors, dirt clouds, under a bright sun already beating down in the early morning of this hot and crowded city known as Delhi. It was at the same time terrifying, peaceful, and completely enlivening."

This was the first entry I wrote two days after arriving in New Delhi, India for what would be a month of volunteer work with a local non-profit organization. I was studying at University College London which gives its students a one month break from when courses end to when exams begin. Through the generosity of the **Nichols Humanitarian Fund**, I was given the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend that month volunteering with International Development Enterprises India, better known simply as IDEI. It has a very noble mission: "to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions of families in need, with special emphasis on the rural poor, by identifying, developing, and marketing affordable, appropriate, and environmentally-sustainable solutions through market forces." What this translates into for IDEI is the development of low-cost drip water irrigation systems and other low-cost, low-energy water-lifting devices such as treadle pumps which they manufacture and market to rural farmers who otherwise have no sustainable ways to irrigate their crops during the non-monsoon months (August - May). Since 90% of the farmers rely on these crops for their total annual income (about \$200), it is critical that they are able to irrigate and raise crops during the dry months to later sell in markets and increase their income. IDEI's genius is in its organizational layout with a supply chain of local manufacturers, distributors, dealers, and village mechanics who advocate on behalf of IDEI in 15 out of the 30 states in India. This allows the company to focus its resources on R&D to produce more effective low-cost irrigation devices. Furthermore, IDEI has removed itself as much as possible from the supply chain which has become a sustainable system capable of running mostly on its own. Last year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation endowed IDEI with \$17.6MM grant to show their support for the organization's great strides in alleviating poverty in India.

During my month there, I was asked to develop a manual for new Business Associates (BAs), the local front-line sales who are local and whose primary responsibilities are to

create awareness of the company and its products and to drive sales. To create the 29 page manual, I worked each day from 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. which are normal business hours in India. Each day the entire central office of around 20 people and I ate traditional Indian lunches together.

I lived with a very nice single man and his son in a very modest area in South Delhi and I was privy to the conditions and difficulties faced by the local population. At times it was a very difficult and uncomfortable feeling to know that what I may earn during a summer internship could be more than 5x what the farmers may earn during the whole year. It is my only hope that the work I did for IDEI will help better train the BAs to be more effective in their role of marketing and selling IDEI's irrigation products.

Journal Entry Two: Growing Comfort, Changing Impressions, and Lessons Learned...

"In a few short weeks I have come to know my small corner of India well and in this entry I may attempt to make larger generalizations about the country as a whole. Let me preface though with this: India is a country with various customs, dialects, and people that vary greatly depending on the region. Much like the United States, India is divided into states and to say that all the states are the same is like saying everything and everyone are the same in Tennessee and Wisconsin or that Californians are the same as New Yorkers. Obviously, it is not true, neither is it true for India. Now for the continuation of my adventure...

Last week I electrocuted myself. It hurt like hell! I had set the bulky metal heating rod in the water bucket to warm the water for my daily standing bath (which I've affectionately come to call it) and 15 minutes later, I went back to check and see if the water was warm enough. I naively stuck my hand in the water only to feel the high-voltage shock of electricity snake towards my elbow at lightning speed. Never do I want to experience that again! And hopefully, after the 24th of April, I'll never have to heat my water the same way again. You may be thinking, well at least you have water, right? Well, not the other day. The entire side of our dirt street was without water for 10 hours from 8 a.m. to the evening. This happened because only one single metal tube feeds water up from the ground and it failed us that day. Fortunately, and I hate to say 'fortunately' in this case, but I had gotten so sweaty on my way home from work the night before that I just needed to take another standing bath when I got home that night. Even though I took the bus the majority of the way, walking to and from the bus stop in jeans, an undershirt and a collared shirt in mid-80 degree heat and a sweltering humidity is enough to make your whole body just feel 'sticky.' It's at the point where you're not quite dripping with sweat yet, but it's definitely creeping in on you all over your body, just waiting for you to exert

more than one ounce of energy before turning into an all out perspiration. Thankfully I came home and had the standing bath at night, and all was well the next day.

Sounds like the trip of a lifetime huh?

But for all that has seemingly gone awry in India, there's much I've come to love about Delhi. For one, it keeps you on your toes. You're never quite sure if someone is giving you a fair price or if they're trying to take advantage of you because you're a 'rich American.' For example, when getting price quotes in street markets or when taking rickshaws (basically big bicycles with two seats in the back that act as taxis), you always have to make your best effort to read the drivers' body language when they give you the price – everything from the subtlety in their facial expressions to how quickly they say the price, to how loudly or softly they say it. If they say the price quickly, in a lower-tone, and look away, they're generally over-charging you and they know it. For me though, I always look at the eyes because the eyes never lie – wherever I've been, they are always the key to the truth.

But certainly not everyone in Delhi is trying to take advantage of you to make a little extra profit. At one point I had to go to the pharmacy. At the end of my first week, I developed a sore throat and was beginning to think I had gotten sick and, like any foreign tourist, thought that a mosquito had possibly gotten to me with malaria. It was an understandable thought though at the time. My arms and legs looked like I had chicken pox again. All over, there were red bites, enlarged and made worse by my scratching. I was getting regularly pillaged every night by mosquitoes. It was getting so bad, that one night I decided to sleep in pants and a sweatshirt. What a poor idea that was! I woke up the next morning, without any new bites, but feeling on the verge of fainting from the heat of it all. So five days after I should have done it, I went to the pharmacy and bought some throat/congestion medicine and a plug-in anti-mosquito oil gadget that goes into the wall and sends out a scent that deters the mosquitoes from coming near you. I figured it would be a few dollars for the medicine and maybe \$6 or \$7 for the device that plugs in the wall and the refillable 45-day oil tub insert. This is equivalent to about 400 rupees which I was willing to pay. Well, imagine my happiness when the register rang up 73 rupees, about \$1.40 for everything! I felt so happy. Those little victories are so worth appreciating.

The second instance came later after work when I was in a crowded market lit by a string of hanging bulbs that looked poorly wired together. I was there looking for a mosquito net (just in-case the yet to be proven plug-in device was insufficient to deter the mosquitoes.) I finally found one in a small hidden section at the back of the market where clearly no people were really going. A kid about 15 years old came up and tried to

help me. Through a series of hand gestures, faces, and English words that I kept using, despite his not knowing what the words meant, I was finally able to convey exactly what I needed and what size I wanted. I was even able to make a joke he understood when he was trying to ask me what color net I wanted. There were three to choose from: neon green, hot pink, and plain white. I pointed to the pink one, then back to my chest and then smiled and made the semi-confused face like “Are you really asking me if I want the hot pink mosquito net!???” We both laughed. Another victory! Then the dreaded price question came. He obviously knew I was interested which was my first mistake. (I know the basic rules of negotiation: Whenever you want something or someone, you have to play it cool and pretend not to be that interested – at least at first, because then you keep the ball in your court, and it forces the seller to lower his price. That's the thing about India – every street market is based on bargaining and negotiations.) But the kid knew I was interested, and if I were him, I would have made me pay just as much as I was probably willing to pay. He knew he was never going to see me again. He said it was 120 rupees which is about \$2.20, which is not bad for the size mosquito net I was getting in good ‘ole plain white. Then he checked with his uncle while I was waiting and while I overly-discreetly got the money out of my leather wallet. When he came back I had my money ready, but he said in poor English, “A-T” and I said “What?” He repeated, “A-T”. OOooh, 80? 80 rupees? He said, “Yes,” and with that took the 100 rupee note I had in my hand. I stood there for a second, pondering what happened and realizing he could have so easily just pocketed 40 rupees without anyone ever knowing what had transpired. As I was walking off, a thought dawned on me, but before I could fully conceptualize it, I felt a tapping on my back. I was already twenty feet past the little kiosk, but the kid had run after me to give me my 20 rupees change. I had completely forgotten I was supposed to receive change from my 100 rupee note and had just started walking away. In appreciation, I attempted to give him one of the 10 notes as a reward for his honesty. To my complete surprise and utter bewilderment though, he smiled, but rejected my offer.

As I was walking away for the second time, I was able to complete my initial thought. It dawned on me that there are a lot of good people in India, people who are honest, who work hard at sometimes less than exciting tasks, and whose personal pride in their job, themselves, or in some higher moral code won't allow them to take handouts, easy routes, or shortcuts. These are people who do the right thing regardless of their financial situation or how easy the take looks – people who take care of each other even when they themselves have so little.

Over the weekend when I was out walking around Delhi with Bijit, the man I live with, he stopped three times to give spare change to disabled beggars on the street. He didn't stop to talk to them; he just acknowledged their presence and pulled some coins out of his

pocket. We as Americans have so often conditioned ourselves to not see what is plainly in front of us. It is refreshing to know that there are people like Bijit out there who even with his very limited income (he rides a bicycle to work and lives in a very poor area of Delhi), are doing the right thing on a daily basis. He is doing more than his fair share of good. Every time we stopped and Bijit gave the beggars money, I felt a sick feeling in my stomach – it was guilt. I always used to think that it was wrong for people to give money to beggars because they were likely just going to use it for drugs or alcohol, and sometimes that may be true. But the truth is I was wrong, and the ill feeling in the pit of my stomach that day proved it, because it's so much more than a question of giving or not giving... it's a question of humanity, and it is people who will ultimately decide if they want to answer that call. As for me, I have answered mine: I know now that I can do more, I can be more, I can give more of myself, I can be more righteous, and I can be the better man."

Once again, a heartfelt thank you to the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for making this journey of service and learning possible.

Best Regards,

Tyler Sanchez

*** I am attaching a few pictures of my experience in India ***



Me using the Treadle Pumps in a remote village in Gorakhpur, India.



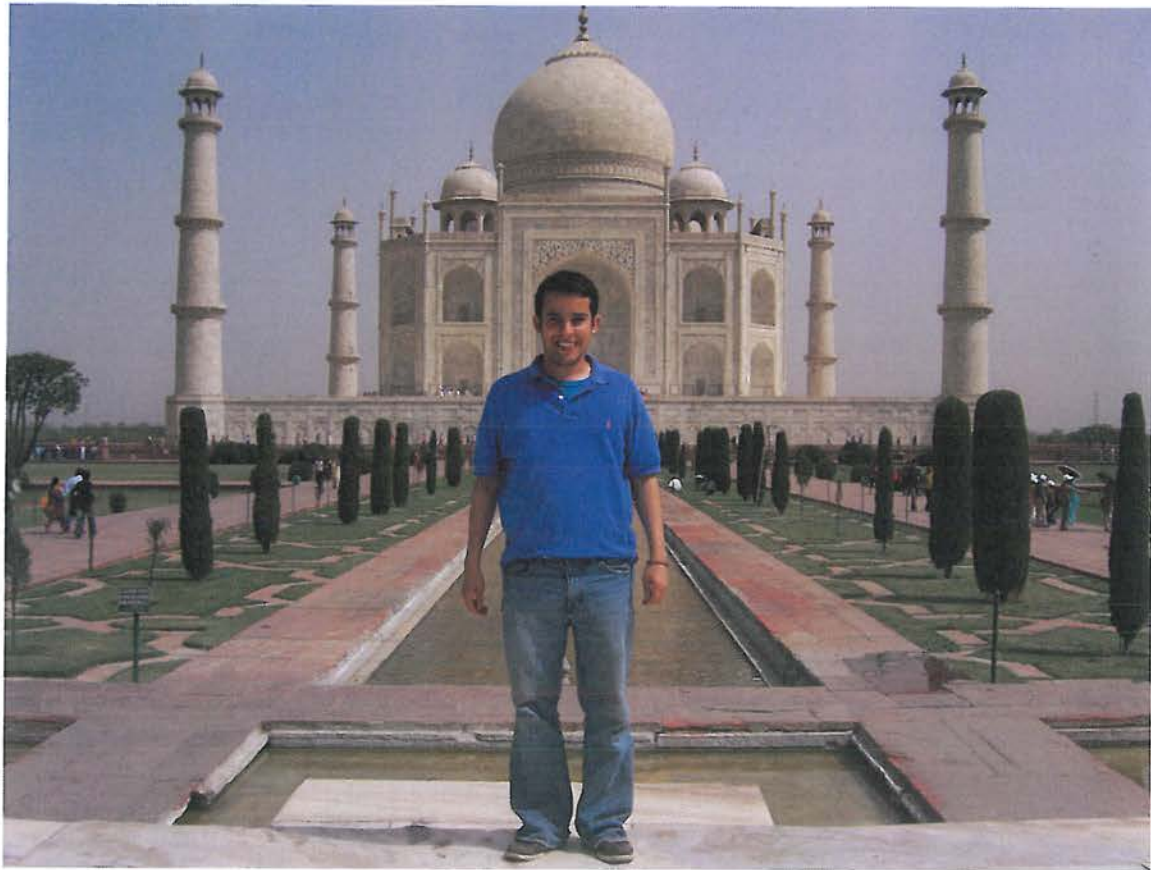
A child learning to use Treadle Pumps on a farm in Gorakhpur, India.



A business associate demonstrates to rural villagers how to operate Treadle Pumps.



The street I lived on in New Delhi for the duration of my stay.



Two days before I left, I had to visit the Taj Mahal in Agra. It is a majestic site to see!

Tyler Sanchez

International Development Enterprises in India (IDEI) Internship



Maggie Shanley

This summer I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to participate in Vanderbilt's VISAGE program in Cape Town, South Africa. During the month I spent abroad, I met new people both in my Vanderbilt group and in my work in the South African townships, learned about South Africa's rich history and culture, and discovered how to be a productive global citizen. None of this would have been possible without the help of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. Therefore, I wanted to take a moment to share some of my experiences.

The VISAGE program at Vanderbilt is a unique program for many reasons, and in my opinion provides a well-rounded study abroad experience. Going into VISAGE, I had no idea what to expect. I did not know anything about South Africa, aside from what I had observed in the Disney Channel's *The Color of Friendship*. The first module of this course, therefore, which I completed in the spring, gave me the chance to familiarize myself with South African culture, and provided a rough idea of what I would be dealing with over the summer.

When I arrived in Cape Town in the end of June, I felt informed, but I was also ready to be surprised. I had spent a lot of time over the past several months reading about the apartheid and the reconciliation efforts that are still very much underway today. Actually seeing it in practice, though, is a different experience all together. I still have the vivid image in my mind of driving to the University of Cape Town from the airport for the first time. As you drive toward the city, there is a distinct moment where you drive over a hill, and you catch a glimpse of the expansive township districts that surround Cape Town. While this soon became a staple of the Cape Town landscape I

grew to know, I could not have appreciated the presence of these townships without actually being there.

Over the next four weeks I had the chance to get to know Cape Town in several different contexts. Through VISAGE, I was able to see the traditional tourist sights, such as Table Mountain, Cape Point, Simon's Beach, Robben Island, to name a few. But I also had the opportunity to see another side of Cape Town thanks to the University of Cape Town's Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organization (SHAWCO). We spent the majority of our time working with SHAWCO to understand more about the townships of Cape Town and how we could best be of use in our brief time in South Africa. While we spent most of our time in Manenberg, the township where we ran a two-week IT program for adults, and a two-week academic program for sixth and seventh grade learners, we also visited several of the other townships during our stay. On our excursions, we were able to see a school in Khayelitsha, a traditional meat market in Nyanga, along with HIV clinics and several examples of social entrepreneurship.

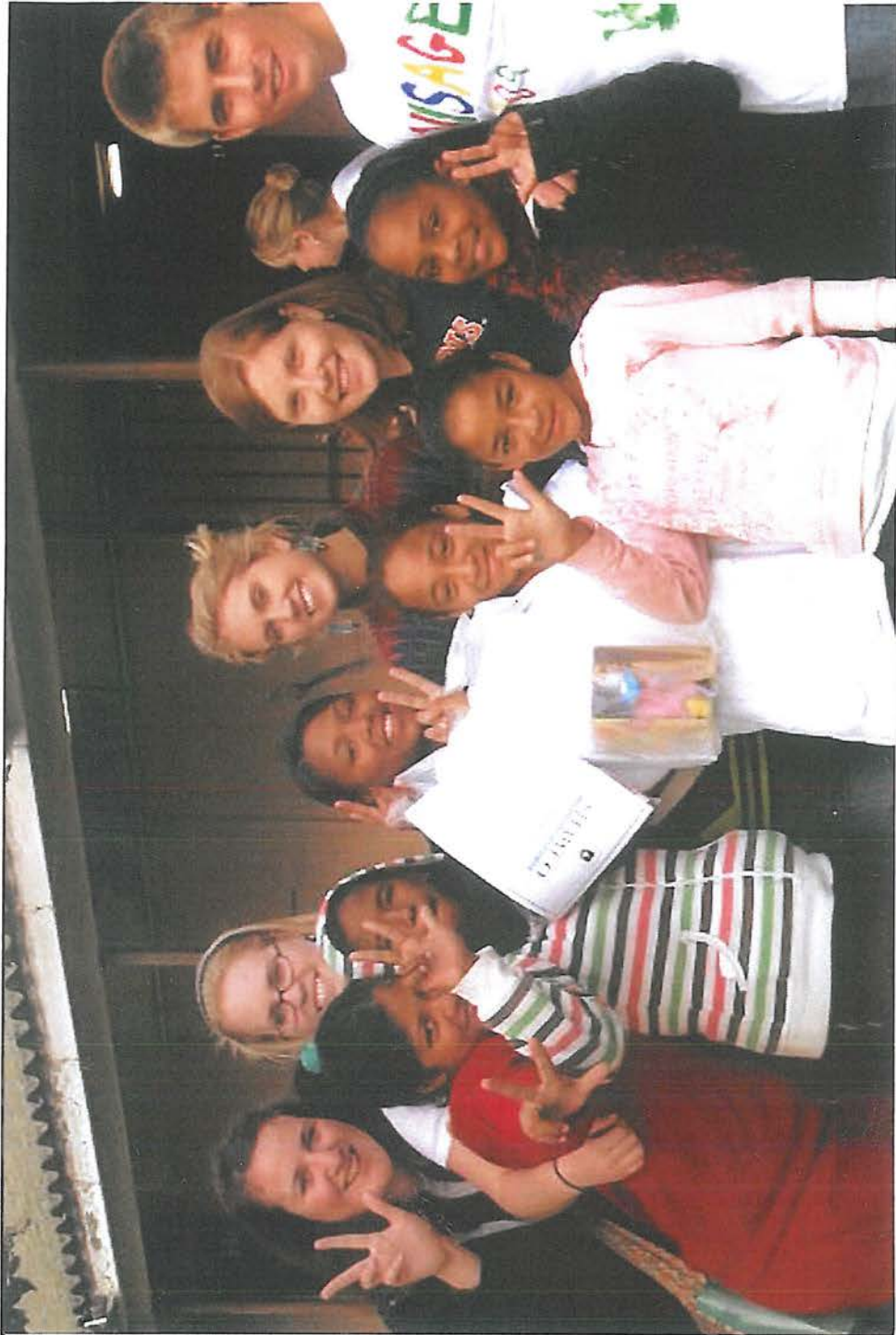
While I could spend pages going into the details of all of these experiences, I realize that I have limited time, so for now I will try and limit myself to my experience in Manenberg. As I said, our time in Manenberg was split evenly between two programs. For the first two weeks, we worked one-on-one with adults from the area, helping them learn to use computers and familiarizing them with the basics of the Internet. Originally, I was a little nervous about the prospect of working one-on-one with an adult learner. For some reason, I thought that as an American college student, I would be perceived as condescending and would have trouble connecting with my learner. In practice, I had the opposite experience. On the first day I was introduced to a woman named Norma

Benjamin. She had lived in Manenberg her entire life, and had never sat down at a computer. From the beginning she was warm, enthusiastic, and eager to learn. We sat down and I began to explain the basics of the computer, and by the end of the session, she telling me about her family and her life story growing up in Manenberg. She was also incredibly open with me, and encouraged me to ask her any questions I had about Manenberg or the townships in general. I did, and I was constantly surprised by how candid she was with me, and how comfortable she felt talking about race and poverty issues in South Africa. When she graduated at the end of the course, she was well versed in computers and was communicating with me via email and facebook. On the last day, we had a tearful goodbye, and she told me that I was welcome to come stay with her in Manenberg anytime.

The next two weeks were spent with some of the children of Manenberg, running an academic holiday program for the sixth and seventh graders. Over the two weeks, I worked in the seventh grade classroom, and I became very close with the girls in my small group. In particular, I worked closely with Nadine Henry, a bright-eyed student who never once missed program, an exceptional accomplishment as we found attendance was a serious problem in these programs. While I think she learned a lot from the lessons we covered, the majority of learning came from the discussions we had. It was clear that though Nadine was only in seventh grade, she had a level of maturity beyond that of many of my classmates back at Vanderbilt. She never hesitated to ask or answer questions, and I think we learned a lot about both our lives just by talking to each other.

I wish I could find a way to fully explain what my time in South Africa meant to me and to the people I worked with. For now, though, I can only say that it was an

amazing experience. Through it, I made new friends and experienced entirely new things. It changed the way I look at the world and my role in it, and none of it would have been possible without the help of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund.







Shaina Tey
VISAGE Nicaragua

Through a scholarship from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I was able to engage in a service learning opportunity this summer that allowed me to learn so much more about the culture and politics of Nicaragua. I did not know much about Central or South America before taking the VISAGE class and going on this trip. I wanted to learn more about this area of the world. I also signed up for the program because I thought that service learning sounded like a great idea. I can now say from experience that understanding the history and politics of a country has greatly enhanced my time abroad this summer.

VISAGE Nicaragua partnered with Manna Project International this summer, which is what I believe to be one of the strongest aspects of the VISAGE program. We were given an opportunity to be a part of a larger and sustainable organization that has a constant presence in Nicaragua, and even though volunteers and program directors come and go, the communities that Manna works with know that Manna is there to stay and is committed to being there permanently.

Our service sites were a wonderful way for us to interact with people and gain a better understanding of life and culture in Managua. The other girls and I had the chance to teach basic English to the children at La Chureca, work with preschoolers at a school in the Chiquilistagua neighborhood, volunteer at a feeding program with women from the community, tutor children at NicaHope, teach dance and computer classes, and play all kinds of sports at the community center every afternoon. During the weekends, our group would travel to different places around the country – for example, we took an eight hour hike up Volcano Maderas on the island of Ometepe, spent a weekend at a beautiful

volcanic crater lake called Laguna de Apoyo, explored a bat cave, and ran down the side of an inactive volcano called Cerro Negro. Nicaragua has definitely surprised me in terms of the amount of natural beauty the country possesses.

From hearing about the poverty that exists in Nicaragua, working with the children at NicaHope, and seeing the hardship that exists at La Chureca, I've come to realize how big of a role the government plays in the progress and development of a nation. We have discussed the idea of social justice in class and the breach that exists between the ideals of social justice and the means by which a society can foster social justice. When looking at the amount of poverty that exists in Nicaragua, social justice seems like something that is extremely out of reach. Even within the United States, one of the most powerful countries in the world, social justice does not exist. Is social justice something that can ever be achieved, or is it just an ideal that can never come to fruition?

During our time in Nicaragua, our group stayed in cabins on a property called La Cantera. Compared to the La Chureca neighborhood, La Cantera is a palace. At the end of a long day of service, I often felt guilty for being able to take a shower and feel clean, to have a safe place to sleep at night, and to always have food to eat when I am hungry. The children that we worked with are not as fortunate. Why are things this way? Why do some children have to sniff glue to get rid of feelings of hunger? Why do I get to sleep in air conditioning and go to a great school in Nashville, when people my age have to go to work in the dump everyday to collect trash for a living? There really is no satisfactory answer. To me, this is the picture of social injustice. I have seen it for myself, on the streets of Managua where children wash car windows and peddle crafts made out of leaves in hopes of getting a few Cordobas.

Tackling the problem of social justice needs to begin with the government, as the history and actions of the government of a country have a huge impact on the social justice problems of the country. In the case of Nicaragua, corruption is widespread in the government and the external influences that the country experienced in the past has caused social injustice in the form of widespread poverty, lack of jobs and a stable economy, and a lack of infrastructure within the country. From what I've read about and seen so far, the solution seems to still always start with the government. While an acceptance of social justice as a value in society is necessary, institutions are necessary to facilitate how social justice will look like and how it can be achieved. Nicaragua has been characterized by a strong democracy since the revolution, but the future now appears to be unstable because of the political power that Daniel Ortega is attempting to amass.

At the end of our trip, it was extremely hard for our group to say goodbye to the kids we worked with at the La Chureca and at The Land. We had all become so attached to them even though we've only been here for four weeks. During our goodbyes, I was reminded of how powerful the building of positive relationships can be. Even though the children will probably not remember us a few months from now, I do think that years from now, they will remember Juntos Contigo (the program at La Chureca) and The Land, and the gringos that came to play soccer with them and have a fiesta with an elmo piñata. One of the guest speakers for our class mentioned that there is often value in looking at the smaller picture of what we are doing, rather than being discouraged by focusing on all the poverty and corruption exists in the world.

Since my trip to Nicaragua, I have gained more of a desire to diminish injustice and to find ways to promote social justice. Perhaps this is too lofty of a goal, but it has

become something that I value greatly. I hope that I will be able to come closer to realizing what my role will be in bringing about meaningful change over the long haul.

Shaina Tey

VISAGE

Nicaragua



Xiomara Trotman
EDUC Cape Town

Many times, when someone hears or sees the word Africa it is often associated with poverty, illness, deprivation and starvation. The commercials depicting Africa on television are those of young kids often diagnosed with AIDS, whose parents have died from AIDS themselves and are in desperate need of proper nourishment. There is rarely any positive advertisement or depiction of Africa, particularly in the media. The books that I have seen, the conversations that I have over heard have only been negative ones, talking about the continent as though it is the most dreadful place in the world. While there are many poverty stricken countries in Africa as well as a serious epidemic of HIV/AIDS, these devastations are not a reflection of the entire continent. My trip to Cape Town, South Africa during Spring Break truly showed me how beautiful Africa is. Initially, it took me a few days to really internalize the fact that I was actually in South Africa! When I think about Africa, I think of someplace far away—a place almost on another universe because of the way that it is discussed.

One of the first things that stood out to me when we first arrived in Cape Town was the mixture of races of the people in South Africa. This observation remained apparent throughout the entire trip especially while at Manenberg Primary School. Here in the United States, race and ethnicity is stressed so much that almost everything is classified according to a person's race. While racial classification may be necessary in some circumstances, race does not need to be stressed nearly as much as it is. As we walked through Manenberg and got to see the kids, one of the first things that I noticed is how different each child looked. It was clear that they were all mixed with different races and ethnicities themselves and did not see a problem with that. This directly relates to *Lucky Simelane* and how throughout the book, no one could figure out what race he was through his looks or his name. Overall, race simply does not matter in South Africa.

The camaraderie among the different students at the University of Cape Town was also an example of the racial and ethnic diversity present in South Africa and the minimal affect that it has on the establishment of friendships and relationships among people. Witnessing such diversity was so enriching and definitely left a lasting impression on my heart. Prior to going to South Africa, I think that my definition of diversity was pretty standard and basic; however, after traveling to South Africa, I was certainly able to formulate a deeper meaning of the word diversity. I honestly thought that racial composition of Africa as a whole was mainly black but after touring Cape Town, I quickly eradicated that assumption.

The highlight of our entire trip to Cape Town, South Africa was the time that we spent at Manenberg Primary School. Although this was the main purpose of our trip, before we went to Manenberg, I did not think that it was going to be as rewarding of an experience as it was. I wish we could have stayed in Cape Town longer in order to have more time to spend with the students/learners. After our first day at the primary school, I thought about the powerpoint presentation and class discussions that were held back in January during our first class meetings. Although we were not able to visit one of the Black townships, I can understand now what the difference between Black and Colored townships are. At first, during our class discussion I was a bit taken aback by the names given to describe the different townships and wondered if things had truly changed since the Apartheid. Now, however, I understand the difference between Black and Colored townships. The kids at the Manenberg Primary School represented hope and change. As I look back on the time we spent with the kids, I remember how happy they were to have us there regardless of the fact that we were complete strangers. It was amazing to me how familiar they were with the pop artists here in the U.S. like Chris Brown and Rihanna. If I had to choose one word to describe our visits to Manenberg it would be "humbling." Despite their

financial situation, both the children and adults all seemed content with their own lives which taught me to be grateful for all that I have been blessed with. It was humbling to see how carefree the learners are and their strong desire to read. Many people underestimate the eagerness that children have to read books and so I was so surprised at how passionate all the kids were about reading.

The one place that we visited, the peace garden, was by far the most moving place that we visited. I would have never thought that a battleground for gangs could be turned into a place filled with such tranquility and anointment. In spite of the scorching temperatures during the times that we visited the garden, it still carried the same sentimental meaning. I was happy to learn that the people in the neighborhood actively support the peace garden and respect the message that Ms. Rita is trying to spread. I think that in every bad community there is some good and Ms. Rita as well as the SHAWCO staff are perfect examples of this. All of the people that we met in Cape Town were also very warm and welcoming, which allowed the trip to be that much more fun.

Our trip to the District Six Museum was indeed very moving and informative. I was not sure what to expect from the museum because I had never heard the title 'District Six' before but once we stepped inside I was eager to find out more about the Apartheid and exactly how the towns and cities were divided based on race and color. I remember the one art on the wall that distinctly stood out to me were the writings on the wall that gave definitions of Black, Colored and European. To think that there was at one point, a document that that stated these descriptions and people were expected to abide by the laws. The trip to Robben Island helped to solidify my thoughts about the Apartheid and how it truly felt to be the victim of the Apartheid. I expected Nelson Mandela's prison cell to be a bit bigger than it actually was; however, I know

that that cell carries years full of hard work, sadness and anger. I paid even closer attention to our tour guide because at one point he used to be a prisoner at Robben's Island. I could only imagine just how difficult and emotional it must be to have to travel throughout the same place where they were punished for being a lobbyist trying to take a just stand for what is right.

Overall, my trip to Cape Town, South Africa was an amazing one. I wish that I could go back there instead of to class every morning. There are so many great lessons to be learned in South Africa, not only about my personal roots, but simply about life and valuing all that it has to offer. It was a very rewarding experience for me filled with many sentiments. I think about the kids at the Manenberg Primary School and hope that they remain in school because they all have the potential to do so. More importantly however, I hope that they all continue to read on a daily basis and not lose the passion that they possess for reading.

Lastly, I cannot forget that my trip to South Africa would not have been possible had I not received funding from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. The fund enabled me to engage in this service opportunity by providing financial assistance for my trip to South Africa. The brief essay that I wrote also allowed me to think about how much traveling to South Africa meant to me and the service and experience that I would gain from engaging in such an opportunity.



Xiomara Trotman

EDUC 2690

South Africa



Jasmine Wilson
VISAGE Costa Rica

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund enabled me to experience a study abroad adventure I believe not only enhanced my academic career at Vanderbilt, but fostered my development as a global citizen as well. Traveling to Costa Rica gave me the opportunity to develop my Spanish proficiency and explore the impact of tourism within the local community.



Costa Rica is a country filled with adventure and extreme appreciation for natural beauty. I've learned that even the smallest gestures—such as painting an aqueduct or making a sidewalk with bare hands—can make a world of difference for any community. It's the maintenance of the environment that society seems to forget about these days.

We forget about ways we can make our community prosper for many years to come and how the outdoors have the ability to represent a major contribution to such prosperity and sustainability. From various hands-on activities to the many “charlas” for our advancement, I now understand that sustainability is not just the act of acquiring characteristics that can label something or someone as ‘eco-friendly,’ but it also requires the determination and the motivation of people who are interested and dedicated to preserving the natural qualities our wildlife and forests have to offer. Conservation methods are not just benefiting ecotourism developments within the country, but it is more importantly providing Ticos with better air-quality, better alternatives to reusing paper, and better living arrangements

to the various endangered-species living in Costa Rica. However, I am also taking away how important civic engagement and social corporate responsibility play into presenting effective



sustainable results. Without the continuing support of various businesses or groups—with the participation of their employees, alliances, and volunteerism from local schools—sustainability would probably not be as driven in Costa Rica as it is now. Support is very important when wanting to achieve complex goals, but Costa Rica gives hope that it is possible to maintain natural beauty.



I feel as though I am much more appreciative of the smaller aspects in life that can be so easily looked over everyday now that I have visited Costa Rica. Being abroad for the first time has allowed me to completely immerse myself into a culture that is very much different from my lifestyle, and now I feel even more open-minded than I did before. My confidence in speaking Spanish is no longer an issue for me anymore, as I am now more comfortable than I've ever felt; and I think I can truly say now that there is nothing like speaking Spanish until you have spoken the language in an actual Spanish-speaking country. Living off gallo pinto everyday isn't bad, and the pineapple—how will I ever compare a fruit as rich as that one in Costa Rica! Maybe that's the type of culture shock I will suffer from the most. Now that I have returned to the states, I am anxious to compare and contrast how different our practices are—as far as sustainable practices nationally—from Costa Rica. What do we pride ourselves on

for preserving our natural environment? This is the question I was left pondering as my plane landed in the states.

I would like thank the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for allowing me the opportunity to embrace Spanish culture not only outside of Vanderbilt, but outside of the United States. I was able to represent the characteristics of what this fund represents through providing service to a community, and I know this experience will further exemplify my appreciation for community service and Latin America.