

2012

Nichols Humanitarian Fund



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Chinanu Chi-Ukpai
Dominican Republic

It was a hot Friday evening when my truck pulled up in front of the Blanco Arriba clinic in the rural Salcedo mountain region of the Dominican Republic. As usual *la brisa*, the breeze, was gently blowing, but after my seemingly endless ride clenching the sides of the bed of a rickety truck that inched vertically to the tops of the mountains and then plunged down to the bottoms, the breeze could do little to relax my sore muscles. As I stared at the clinic that I was to spend the next week in, I immediately wished that I was back in my own bed in Houston, Texas, with steady electricity and hot water.

Up until this point, I had spent most of my time taking community health classes at Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra in Santiago. Although many acute diseases are still taking their toll on the population, initiatives that target chronic conditions and public health programs are quickly on the rise in the Dominican Republic. One such public health issue is accidents which are the second leading cause of death in the country. I was tasked with researching home, car, and motorcycle accident rates within the Dominican Republic and developing community-based methods of accident prevention for children and adults both in the home and during transit. This information was to be compiled into a 5-10 minute discussion-based talk, *la charla*. During my week in Blanco Arriba, and in a subsequent week in the poverty-ridden community of Los Prados on the south side of Santiago, I tailored my *charlas* to make them more relevant to the types of accidents and resources available in both communities.

During the weeks I spent online and in the library investigating these



problems, I lived in a homestay with a gracious upper middle-class family in one of the country's wealthier cities. Most days, on my walk home from classes, my classmates and I would stop at an Italian ice cream shop for some decadent *helado*. In Santiago, I had come to consider my study abroad as a sort of lavish vacation. This would seem worlds away from the week I would spend in Blanco Arriba, where cold water was a luxury that I was privileged to drink the one full day the electricity ran long enough to cool the items in the refrigerator.

Although I had spent a month learning the intricacies of healthcare in the country, it wasn't until my week in Blanco Arriba that I saw firsthand the effects of the broken system. The clinic in Blanco Arriba served numerous towns hidden away throughout the mountainous region. Every month the clinic received a shipment of medications that were provided free of charge to patients. Although the clinic had a lot of success in providing treatment to patients with minor injuries or conditions, it was ill-equipped to treat major problems or disease outbreaks. The lack of electricity and poor air circulation made it difficult to treat patients at night or to provide inpatient care. The short-lived medication supply meant that patients who came in at the beginning of the month received

adequate supplies of the medications they needed, but those that showed up toward the middle or end of the month were lucky if there were any more medicines left to give out. These health disparities were not just a consequence of living in a secluded region of the country.

The following week after my time in Blanco Arriba, I worked in the Los Prados community located on the south side of Santiago. Even in the city there were pockets of people with limited or no access to primary care let alone emergency care facilities. It was amazing to see the health disparities I had observed in Blanco Arriba play out on a smaller scale in Santiago. Less than 20 minutes away from the affluent neighborhoods that surrounded my homestay and the university I attended, there were miserable housing and living conditions where residents were also secluded from adequate healthcare due to a lack of resources.

As I worked with the residents of Blanco Arriba and Los Prados, their desperate situations reminded me of the health inequalities also found in the United States, one of the world's richest countries. Like the Dominican Republic, America's broken healthcare system creates unfortunate disparities that allow thousands of people to fall through the cracks. Through my experience in the Dominican Republic, I came to a better realization of the importance of a health system that is

accessible to all, regardless of wealth or social status. I also fully began to understand the necessity of community-based solutions, especially in the field of health care. In order to affect change within a community, the needs and resources of that community must be taken into account. I could not suggest the same accident prevention measures for Blanco Arriba that I would for Los Prados because they had diverse types of common accidents and vastly different available resources.

My experience in the Dominican Republic not only helped to shape my view of healthcare problems that plague most nations worldwide, but it gave me the opportunity to help find solutions to these problems. Though the extreme poverty and lack of resources I observed in certain parts of the country was discouraging at first, I found hope through working in the community, learning the names of patients, and listening to their goals for their futures. This hope is one of the many reasons that I am extremely thankful to have received an award from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. Without the Fund, I would not have been able to afford to travel to the Dominican Republic. I would never have sipped on *chinola* juice while sitting on the porch of the Blanco Arriba clinic watching children play by the river as *la brisa* carried all the cares and worries of the day away. I would not have had the opportunity to affect change, however small, through my 10 minute *charlas*. And I would never have had the opportunity to be inspired by the infinite hope of a resilient people despite their miserable circumstances.



Catherine Cocke
Zanzibar

When I touched down in Zanzibar, I was giddy upon returning back to Africa—the continent that had changed my life during my study abroad semester in South Africa. However, while South Africa was heavily influenced by traditional African customs and cultures, Zanzibar was a melding pot of African and Arabian traditions. Women's bodies were covered, and the island stopped during prayer times. As I drove along the bumpy unpaved roads that took me to where I would be staying, I was mesmerized by the ox carts that men still used to transport goods and children used to mess around in and laugh while whipping the animals. It was hard for me to grasp that this form of transportation was still being used so widely, but I loved the simplicity of it and could immediately sense the tight-knit community of the villages, for many did not have a way to move far.

After an initial orientation at Creative Solutions, the non-profit through whom I worked, I was immediately placed with three other students at a local secondary school. Some of my favorite memories are my walk to and from the school each day. Our trek was about two miles round-trip along the main road that ran through the village of Mangapwani, Zanzibar. Many shops and homes lined this main road, and little kids would always run out waving and yelling, "bye bye! Bye bye!" Their English was obviously limited, and we always had a good laugh when we asked things such as, "how old are you?" and their response was, "I am fine!" However, the amusement of their lack of English skills did not last long.

We arrived at Fujoni School and found out the name literally translates from Swahili to "School in Chaos." Sounds

about right. I taught English with another girl, and the two other Vanderbilt students taught Biology and Chemistry. We initially began by observing some teachers teach so that we could have a better understanding of the school, instruction methods, and the level of the students. My co-teacher and I wanted to scream in frustration at our initial observation session, where the teacher with whom we were working taught articles to the class. Some of his mistakes included telling the students that the word "unique" is pronounced "you-knee-Q" and then having the class repeat the incorrect pronunciation 4 times and instructing that you cannot use "the" with plural nouns. His example was that "the books" is incorrect. These are only a few of the dozens of examples of mistakes that I wanted to fix. It was great motivation because I knew my co-teacher and I were definitely needed, but it was frustrating knowing that once we left, the kids would continue having the same poor instruction. All of their national exams are given in English, so it is imperative for them to learn the language, or else they will not pass their grade level and eventually be forced to drop out. Therefore, it was of upmost importance to us to make a lasting impact on the school—one that would not fade after we left. Thus, we spoke with the principal and asked that the teacher whose class we were teaching always be in the classroom when we gave our lessons. We also always planned out our topics with the teachers. This way, the teachers learned new instruction methods. Instead of just making the students memorize things, we used interactive methods that would encourage speaking. Our new methods soon spread throughout the school, and other teachers asked that we sit in on their class and assess them afterward. The teachers there really want to teach the kids well,

they just have no tools or good instruction methods. The students have grown up being taught to memorize, and any critical thinking is extremely hard for them, for they have not been trained to apply knowledge in new contexts or link different concepts together. While it was flattering to have the teachers ask for our help, it was when students with whom we had not yet worked approached us begging for us to teach them that I realized how desperate they were to learn. At first, I was hesitant about going to another country to teach my own language. Why should they speak English? Shouldn't I just let them be, only speaking their native tongue of Swahili?, I questioned. However, after speaking with the students, I discovered my naiveté of the situation. Because all of their classes and exams are taught and given in English, learning this language is their best hope of getting an education and overcoming poverty. In a way, my hesitancy at teaching English was entirely selfish and unsearched.

Another thing that really made me think was my experience with corporal punishment. When a student did not speak up, misbehaved, or got an answer wrong, many times teachers hit them with a stick. It was absolutely painful to watch, and because we were only guest teachers for a month, there was not much we could do. We could not take over the teacher's classroom and implement a new punishment system. I wish we had been there longer so that we could have trained the teachers in different actions to take. However, the absolute worst thing to watch happened on a Thursday. In the middle of one of our English lessons, we heard the principal ring the emergency cowbell that signals all students to go outside for a school-wide announcement. The students were giddy with excitement and

leapt out of their desks. As they all gathered around, we saw a few teachers walking up with about 10 sticks, which we knew was not a good sign. Up at the front was boy and a chair. It did not take long to figure out that this boy was going to be beaten, badly, in front of the entire school. The students all had wide inquisitive eyes and many turned around and laughed at us Americans for looking on in horror at the situation. We found a man who spoke English to explain to us what was happening, and he informed us that the previous day a student had beaten a teacher, and he was going to be punished in front of his parents and fellow students as an example. When we explained that in America, that student would most likely be expelled, they did not understand. Why deny a kid access to education rather than simply hurt him temporarily? When we kick out delinquent children, are we sending them down a path of delinquency? They have to go to special schools with other kids who have messed up. They are labeled as "troubled." Do people live into the labels given to them by society? When sending someone to a special school for delinquents, are we in a way telling them we expect them to act differently? Is it better in the long run to give a kid a humiliating, short-term punishment that teaches him a lesson and then saying, "okay, you can go back with the other kids again. We now expect you to act like them. You are not expected to act out again."? I definitely still do not have the answers. Corporal punishment is an awful thing, but so is sending someone down a path of delinquency. Will this really ever encourage them to change? The experience forced me to throw out so much of what I had believed and reevaluate my understanding of the issue. While I had thought their form of punishment was backward and needed to change, the

teacher at the school thought the exact same thing of our form of punishment. I was challenged to question why I think our ways are better and are being placed on them, and I quickly realized how much we can learn from sitting down and speaking with others. It was an incredibly humbling experience, and I am grateful that the teacher spoke out against our beliefs.

This experience will forever shape my understanding of international development, and it has further cemented my desire to go into this field. Poverty is a very complex matter, and only by going into the field and meeting with locals will I ever be able to have some kind of grasp on issues contributing to the economic inequality. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity that the Nichols Humanitarian Fund has given me and will forever remember my experiences from my time as a highlight of my time at Vanderbilt. It is a blessing to have been able to learn and serve in such a deep and meaningful way and has greatly supplemented the outstanding education I have already received here at Vanderbilt University

Stella Forcehimes
Uganda

Thanks to the Nichols Fund, I was able to spend the Fall semester of 2012 in Kampala, Uganda, working for Uganda Lawyers for Human Rights. My four months in Uganda were spent in a variety of ways. As part of my legal studies, I familiarized myself on Uganda law as it touches on the most vulnerable in society—women, children, the impoverished, and, in Uganda, those most affected by decades of internal conflict.

Outside of the office, my legal education took on a concrete nature. I was able to prepare a short lecture for sex workers interested in knowing their rights as laborers and members of domestic households. I also participated in child education efforts by interviewing community members and mapping children that were not currently enrolled in school, making them vulnerable to child exploitation. In my work for a local NGO—

Platform for Labour Action—I aided a lawyer in providing legal services for indigent laborers. In this line of work, I helped arrange mediations between employers and their employees in order to settle disputes over terms of severance and due emoluments.

My most meaningful experience, however, was my work with the Uganda Amnesty Commission. For this part of my studies, I traveled to the northern Ugandan town of Gulu, where I was able to meet and interview former abducted children. Words cannot express the pain and tribulations these children have endured at the hands of Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. Meeting them was perhaps the greatest motivation I have had to become a lawyer involved in human rights. I am deeply thankful to the Nichols Foundation for allowing me this wonderful and life-changing experience.

Jennifer Garcia
Ecuador



In May 2012, I went to Quito, Ecuador, with a group of Vanderbilt students to serve various organizations in Quito. It was my first time leaving the United States, and I would be travelling without my family and friends. I was nervous about leaving home and entering a new country that I knew nothing about. However, what drove me to travel to Ecuador was the ability to help others who were in great need. I have always enjoyed volunteering, so I was eager to give my time in a new country.

I decided to apply to volunteer at The Camp Hope Foundation, an organization dedicated to educating students with disabilities in Quito. Most of the students there are orphans who were abandoned by their families, found on the streets alone, or taken from their families by neighbors or friends and dropped off at the Camp Hope building. Many are in wheelchairs and nonverbal, and therefore need constant care and assistance for everyday tasks. As an undergraduate studying Special Education and Spanish, this opportunity felt like it was made for me. Before I left, I was excited to serve and experience a new culture, and in the end, the experience truly changed my life.

The Camp Hope Foundation is a small organization fighting against the stereotypes of people with disabilities. In Ecuador, less than 1% of people with disabilities are able to receive an education. In contrast, every child with disabilities in the United States is guaranteed a free and public education until the age of 22. As a future Special Education teacher, the number of children that go uneducated is heartbreaking to me. Working with the organization, I soon learned that people with disabilities in Ecuador have a very low life expectancy because they do not get the care they need. If they do receive the right care, they often sit at home all day because there are little resources and schools for them to attend. The support is not available. However, Camp Hope is trying to change this statistic, taking in as many students as they can afford. The organization owns a school and an orphanage where the majority of the students live.



Every volunteer at Camp Hope is welcomed warmly. The school and orphanage became my second home, and I spent almost all my time there. While they have some staff members, there are not enough to give each student one-on-one attention throughout the day. Therefore, volunteers are kept very busy assisting with all parts of the routine, from feeding

to dressing to playing. In the classroom, the more volunteers available, the more interaction the children would receive throughout the day. Furthermore, since most of the students were orphans, they lived in the orphanage with only two staff members and twelve children, and the attention they received in the classroom was usually the most attention they received all day. It was easy to jump right in and work with the students. I did various activities with them, from playing in the playground to reading.



While I know I was a huge help to the children and staff, they had a huge impact on my life as well. The hard work of the staff is what inspires me to teach every day and dedicate my life to children with disabilities. They spend so much of their time with the children and they are my role models as a future educator. Furthermore, I fell in love with each student there. I learned how to better love every student, no matter what disability they have. They all showed me love. Every day, I felt hopeful for the future of the students and thankful for the opportunity to help the students and staff at Camp Hope. The experience made me appreciate serving others even more and I look forward to serving a similar community in the future.

Without the money I received from the Nichols Scholarship, I would have never been able to travel to Ecuador. The

amazing students, staff, and volunteers I met in Ecuador changed my life in more ways than I could have ever expected. They opened my eyes to a new way of looking at life. Their acceptance of differences among a culture of discouragement and rejection is inspiring. I will never forget the faces of the beautiful children I assisted and bonded with daily. I look forward to visiting them in the future. I want to thank the Nichols and all those involved in the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for their help and support throughout my experience. It was an amazing trip. *Gracias!*

Madison Glasgow
Ecuador

Without assistance from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I would not have been able to take advantage of the opportunity to travel to Quito, Ecuador, and engage in service with other Vanderbilt students. The aid that the Fund offered was insurmountable and allowed for me to solidify my travel plans with little financial reservation.



While in Quito, I chose to work at an organization called Camp Hope, which was an established school for people with low incidence disabilities. The organization also consisted of an orphanage to house the majority of its students and a day school for typically developing peers. In the month that I spent in this placement, I experienced work in different classrooms. The most significant portion of my service was spent with Audi and her adult students who lived in the orphanage. As they were all beyond school age but unable to work or live independently, the organization created an opportunity for them to contribute by forming an art room. In this room the students utilized their abilities, with help from Audi and volunteers from all over the world, to create marketable crafts.

These crafts, in turn, brought in revenue for the organization to help keep it running. This was the most incredible experience for me because I was able to contribute to the organization's profit by helping to make crafts while building relationships and learning about working with people with disabilities.

As a special education major, this was completely eye-opening for me in respect to how special education works internationally. In this case, the students were treated with so much love and care while being institutionalized. Even though many of them didn't have homes, making it hard to integrate them into society, it was pretty clear that the mission was to make sure every student was comfortable in this private school. There was a stark contrast between what the goals of the United States are and what those seemed to be in Ecuador, but even with a completely different outlook on what services students with disabilities should receive, the teachers and volunteers loved and cared for each and every student so much that it was clear they were living a fulfilling life, just in a different sense of the word.

One relationship that I formed which will touch me for a long time was my bond with Marisol. Youthful and bright, she had so much character.

Even though she was not able to communicate verbally, she was so intelligent and you could literally read her thoughts



in her eyes. She had cerebral palsy, a disability with which I had never worked before and which I was frankly uncomfortable with before my visit. Within an hour of being with Audi and Marisol and seeing how they played off of one another, I was completely settled and could communicate with her relatively easily. We would do stretch exercises, eat lunch, and just have a fun conversation about how beautiful the day was in our time outside, and all the time Marisol would be smiling and looking at me warmly. I remember all of the students from the art class, but Marisol touched me in a way that I can't even explain. She made me realize that I was in the right major and working toward the right life goal because unspoken friendships like these are incredible and irreplaceable. Upon our final day at the camp, she gave me a crafted rose, and I gave her the biggest hug I've ever given. She is older than I am, and I felt like we could have been sisters by the end of that month because she had taught me so much about herself, the world, and even about myself.

In the end, my time in Quito was both inspiring and motivating to work for the rights and care of people with disabilities all around the globe. I cannot thank the Nichols enough for granting me this opportunity, and I will never forget their generosity. Their gift lives on forever in my heart as I still feel a connection to Camp Hope today, and I hope to go back and serve again when I can find the time and funds. I know that many people deserve the chance to serve, learn, and grow in an abroad experience, and I am so incredibly thankful that I was chosen to partake in such an adventure.



Melanie Gonzalez
New Zealand

To say that I would not have been able to achieve my dream of studying abroad in New Zealand without the aid of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund is an understatement. The Fund single-handedly got my dreams back on track. After being granted the money from the scholarship I threw myself into volunteering once I settled myself in New Zealand. I do a lot of community service normally, not only to help others but because I have found few other activities that give me the sense of fulfillment that volunteering does. When I had dreamed about studying abroad, I had always included volunteering in that dream and being granted the Nichols Humanitarian Fund gave me that much more incentive to do so.

After the initial adjustment period of moving to another country, I went to an organization called Volunteer Wellington, which is a third-party organization that matches individuals with volunteer positions that correspond with their interests. Having grown up with a close relationship with my great-grandparents and volunteering with the elderly throughout my life, I knew that that was what I wanted to do. Volunteer Wellington suggested a couple of positions with the elderly and, of those, I decided to volunteer at Te Hopai Home and Hospital. Te Hopai Home and Hospital contains a retirement home, a dementia ward, and a hospital. I volunteered with the residents at the retirement home for several hours every Monday doing things from balloon tennis, to indoor bowls (a New Zealand game which is a cross between bowling and croquet), to leading and participating in a reading and poetry hour. Part of the

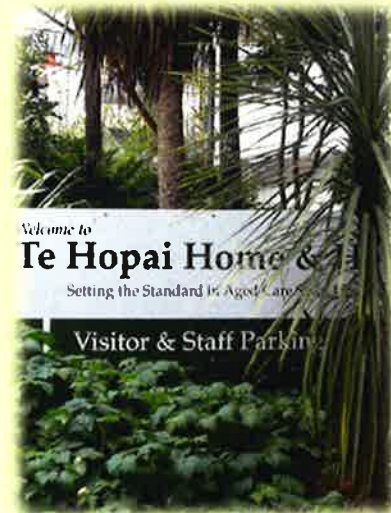
reason I wanted to keep volunteering with the elderly was that I thought it would provide not only different insight about the community (since Wellington was mostly populated with a younger generation), but it would make for a great comparison on how another country treated and cared for the older members of their society. While volunteering at Te Hopai did provide me with some insights on these topics, what surprised me most was the sheer variety of people at the retirement home. I had thought that the majority of

those at Te Hopai would be native Kiwis; however, there were people

from Japan, Denmark, Canada, America, Ireland and more. I had been told

that New Zealand (and especially Wellington since it is the capital) was an international community, and those at Te Hopai brought that home to me more than anything else.

Despite the variety of the residents at Te Hopai in terms of their backgrounds and levels of mobility, I was amazed at the things that brought us together. For example, one of the activities I loved most was the reading and conversation hour that Te Hopai organized. All of the residents that wanted to join would meet me and one of the volunteer directors in the sun room and we would either read from a book of their choice, or one of the residents would bring in some poetry



they had written and share it with the group. One of my majors is in English Literature, and while I was studying in New Zealand, I took a New Zealand Literature course and was able to connect with the residents on authors such as Katherine Mansfield (iconic NZ author) who I had never heard of prior to arriving in NZ. I want to thank the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for giving me the support to travel to Te Hopai every week and allowing me to connect with the residents there on a level I never thought I could in a foreign country. Volunteering added an invaluable dimension to my time abroad, and I know that without the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, my stay would have been all the poorer without it.



*Alexandra Hall
Ecuador*



Travel changes your world view. Service fosters compassion for the natural life around you. I have been fortunate. My travel experiences at Vanderbilt have always connected the two concepts. Through Service-Learning trips, I helped to construct a community center in Chiapas, Mexico, in August 2010; I worked alongside Buddhist monks as an English teacher in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, in May 2011; and in May 2012 I helped to plant over one hundred native Ecuadorian tree species in a city park in addition to teaching English classes to high school students at the INEPE community school in Quito. The generosity of the Nichols family, as demonstrated through their Nichols Humanitarian Fund, has enabled me to have the opportunity to experience life abroad in ways I never thought possible. As a result of this Fund's support, I spent one month living, learning, and serving in Quito, Ecuador, in May 2012 through the Office of Active Citizenship and Service's Ecuador Project.

The date of Friday, May 4, 2012, was a bit of a blur for me. My flight to Quito, Ecuador, was scheduled for the following day, but I couldn't think that far ahead. May 4th was a very hectic day. My

final Anthropology paper, an 18-page essay, was due at 12PM; lunch with my two best friends (one a graduating Senior) was planned at 1PM; my parents were going to leave from Atlanta and arrive in Nashville before 1:30PM; and somehow I had to move out of my Highland Quad suite and pack for a month in Ecuador in less than 24 hours. No stress. I knew that the pay-off, one month of service and learning in Quito, would be well-worth the pre-trip shambles.

By 12PM on Saturday, May 5th, I was on a flight to Ecuador. This was my first trip to South America, and I was, initially, more excited about crossing hemispheres than getting to my final destination. Flying into the city, I remember being awestruck by the multitude of lights. Once we landed, the 2012 Ecuador Project group, composed of 12 Vanderbilt undergraduate students and our project coordinator, made our way through the illuminated city of Quito to the Otavalo-Huasi Hostelería where we would eat and sleep for the next month.

In the next few days we began our individual service projects within the city.

Some students worked at a clinic, shadowing doctors and assisting patients where possible. Others volunteered at Camp Hope, a school for economically, mentally, and physically disadvantaged children, teens, and young adults. I, and a few others, worked at INEPE, a community school in the south of Quito, Ecuador. INEPE functions as a community organization, serving the surrounding Chilibulo



area through the following efforts: Local Development, Communication and Research, Education, Youth Education, Music Programming, and Community Health. The main focus of INEPE is, of course, the education of youth in the area. All young people, newborns to 18 year olds, have access to quality education at this school. Given the wide array of projects that INEPE provides for the community, I knew that I would have no problem finding a service activity that I am passionate about.

In the first few weeks, I assisted INEPE's Head English teacher, Sra. Silvana, in her two 10th grade classes. Through small group conversation sessions, I was able to engage with these young people and help them practice their English. As a result of these discussions, I got to know students on an individual level and learn more about Ecuador through youth perspectives. On a couple of days during the week, I would spend the school day working outdoors and planting trees with the school's environmental project specialist, Sr. Gonzalo. Over the course of one month, we planted 118 native Ecuadorian tree species in Parque Chilibulo. I will never forget the feeling of accomplishment I felt after planting my final tree there on May 29th. Someday I hope to return and see how our trees have grown, how the park has developed, and, similarly, how the school has progressed in its mission of serving the community.

The Ecuador Project has been my longest trip to a Spanish-speaking country to date. I expected to learn more of the language over the course of my stay. However, I learned more about the importance of community development efforts: environmental projects and educational opportunities for youth. I learned that the sum of these efforts equals posi-

tive social change. For the opportunity to learn this important lesson while experiencing the beauty and diversity of the Ecuadorian people and landscape I give my thanks to the Nichols Humanitarian Fund.



Greetings Nichols Family,

My name is Alexandra Hall, and I am a Senior at Vanderbilt. I would like to express my deep gratitude for the scholarship that allowed me to travel and serve in Quito, Ecuador, in May 2012. Because of your generosity, and the award that I received through your Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I had the unique experience of living in Quito, teaching English at a community school, and volunteering at a public park for nearly four weeks.

For the duration of my stay, I aided an English teacher at the INEPE School in South Quito, and there I had the opportunity to engage with several young Ecuadorians on a daily basis and experience the sort of intercultural exchange that makes travelling so exciting. Through conversation sessions, I was able to help several students with their English conversation skills in a comfortable, non-classroom setting, and I in turn learned a great deal about the Ecuadorian diversity and society. I created

and taught my own lesson to a class there and gained useful skills in the area of teaching (the field in which I hope to one day work).

Outside of the classroom, I helped to plant over one hundred native tree species at the Parque Chilibulo in an effort to combat the spread of invasive Eucalyptus species in the area. I gained a different perspective on the "Green Movement," especially as it occurs in Latin America, through my involvement in this project.

For the opportunity to serve and learn in South America, I thank you. Your funds have opened up opportunities for me that I never thought possible. I hope to soon thank you all in person, but until then, please accept this letter as an expression of my sincere appreciation for your extraordinary generosity.

Best Regards,

*Alexandra Hall
Vanderbilt University
Class of 2013
Interdisciplinary Studies: Foreign Policy in
the Americas*

Nisha Khorasi
Zanzibar



On May 5, I stepped onto a plane in Atlanta, Georgia, to begin my journey to Mangapwani, Zanzibar. Two days and four flights later, I found myself sitting around a wooden table, welcomed by plates of fresh fruit and cups of steaming tea. Mama Aida gave us a warm welcome speech, and she explained the structure of our days. We would all be assigned to different schools around the village and teach daily for three hours. After that, we would come home for lunch and have the rest of the day to spend working on art projects around the compound and teaching or attending classes in the outdoor classroom. We were responsible for our own chores, such as cleaning our rooms, washing our clothes, and cooking our dinners.

Mama Aida had just introduced us to what the next month of our lives would be like. I was in Mangapwani Village with eight other Vanderbilt students to teach. My partner and I were assigned to Mangapwani Preschool, a grey, two-room building. I recall walking into the "classroom" on the first day and being shocked at the conditions in which these students were so thankful to learn in. The concrete floors had holes filled with dirt. The handmade posters around the room had

torn, brown edges. The chalkboard had cracks in it. The pencils and notebooks were stacked in a corner, barely usable. As an education major, I was surprised by how students were expected to create a classroom community in such an environment with extremely limited resources.

After the initial shock of the learning conditions of our preschoolers, my teaching partner and I quickly adopted the daily schedule of our students. On Mondays and Fridays we taught English; Tuesdays were for math; Wednesdays were spent creating art; and Thursdays were for learning and signing songs. Although I thoroughly enjoyed teaching every day, I especially enjoyed singing and dancing with the students on Thursdays. Sometimes, we would have the opportunity to walk home with the preschoolers. Along the way, they would sing the songs we had just learned.



In addition to working with the preschoolers, we were also able to experience teaching adults during the Tuesday and Thursday night classes. The students were so warm and welcoming—they took us on their ox carts to explore the slave caves, beaches, and other villages.

Even though we came to Zanzibar with the intent to teach, I believe we learned more than we could have ever hoped to teach. The people of Zanzibar

appreciate everything and everyone around them. They welcomed us with open arms to their country, to their village, and to their homes. Without the support of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I would have never had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Zanzibar Project 2012, one of the most phenomenal experiences of my life.

Dear Nichols Family,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for providing me with the means to pursue such a wonderful experience. I came to Zanzibar excited to help others learn, but I never expected to learn as much as I did from them. The natives of Mangapwani welcomed us with open doors, open minds, and open hearts.

Teaching with an international nonprofit helped me gain experience in something I hope to do in the future. Without your support, I would not have been able to experience such a wonderful culture with such wonderful people. Once again, I thank you so much for the humbling opportunity to learn from such a phenomenal journey.

Nisha Khorasi



Nina Lim
Zanzibar

Last year I was greatly interested in a service program called Zanzibar project 2012. When I first heard about the project, I was very excited to participate in the program because, through this project, I was not only given an opportunity to visit Africa but also an opportunity to teach young African students. This project was particularly appealing to me because I study elementary education and child studies for my undergraduate study at Vanderbilt University, and I thought this service program would be a great opportunity for me to experience teaching in a whole different place with a whole different people.

I was ready to join the program except that the trip to Africa was very expensive. It was the Nichols Humanitarian Fund that enabled me to gladly accept the opportunity to participate in the program. I want to thank everyone who has allowed me to have this valuable opportunity to go to another country and teach young students and I want to share what I have experience through this trip.



Through this experience, I have learned and gained so many new perspectives, and it even helped me decide what I want to do and become in the future. Be-



fore going on this trip, I thought I would go to Zanzibar and simply have fun teaching children because I was always passionate about teaching children. However, through this program I gained so much more than what I thought I would. I not only made culturally diverse and caring friends, but I also learned to appreciate what I have and to be more optimistic about challenges I might face throughout my life. I have observed that people in this island are happy and nice no matter what they have and that they are truly appreciative of where they are. After the program, I began to think about educational gaps that exist among children around the world, and this led me to think more deeply about equal rights to education. Another part I loved about this experience was that I was truly immersed with the community there, and I learned a lot about their culture and language as well as to be more appreciative of different cultures. It also boosted my curiosity and passion for learning about different cultures around the world. Moreover, it directed my future study toward international education and how to improve educational systems around the world. My ultimate goal or dream is to travel to different countries around the world and give equal access to education for students and also advise teachers of some effective and efficient teaching strategies, and I believe this experience has set up a nice, strong foundation for my goal.

Meaghan McArdle
Guyana



Thanks to the Nichol's Humanitarian Fund, I was able to spend the summer working in the Emergency Department of a Hospital in Guyana, a country on the Eastern Coast of South America. It provided me with means for travel, as well as for safe lodgings and food while in the Guyana. In Guyana, like in many other lesser developed nations, health education is often neglected. People with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma do not know how to manage their illnesses, and this often leads to worsening of their conditions. My project in Guyana was to work with the many patients who came to the Emergency Department with asthma.

During the two months that I spent in Guyana, I performed a simple research study in which I asked patients questions about their asthma, and then I spent some time educating them about asthma medications and asthma control. I provided them with educational pamphlets and answered their questions. I covered the "asthma room," where they would put asthmatic patients. The room had educational posters and I made use of these educational materials to inform the patients. I also worked with the nursing staff and provided them with an outline for patient education so that they could continue with patient education after I left.

Working in the asthma room, I learned a great deal about medicine and health education. I faced obstacles when my patients were illiterate, when they could not understand either my words or my accent, and even when they simply did not believe what I was telling them. From many patients I was rewarded with thanks. Many of my patients were extremely grateful for the information that I had provided them, and many parents were happy to have hope for their children's health. To them, I was a listening ear; they would express their frustrations with their healthcare, their financial situation, the lack of medicines that they had to deal with. I was also grateful to them for answering my questions, listening to my advice, and making me feel that my project was a success.

I also learned a great deal when I left the asthma room. When there were no patients in the asthma room, I would wander out into the Emergency Department, which was simply two small rooms with about 12 beds and a few chairs for patients to sit in. In this understaffed and overcrowded Emergency Room, I learned so much about the world. I befriended the doctors in the Emergency Department, and they would allow me to shadow them, an opportunity which allowed me to see patients as well as observe procedures. I learned that, in Guyana, primary care is almost nonexistent, especially for the poor, so many patients with simple ailments that would not require hospitalization in the states would come to the ED just to see a doctor. I saw that when a machine was broken, and there was no one with the know-how to fix it, it remained broken, and sick patients were turned away. I learned that certain patients just could not be helped, even if they could have been in the states, due to a lack of resources. But my experience in Guyana

was not all sad and unfortunate. I also learned that in an understaffed, and resource poor hospital, a great deal of good can be done. I saw really wonderful doctors perform impossible feats under the circumstances. I saw how, when lacking a specific instrument, the Guyanese doctors would detect the same things, simply using their human senses. I was astounded by the way that the overworked doctors could treat even the most difficult patients with tenderness and mercy.

However, the experiences that really gave me hope were my encounters with very forward thinking medical professionals who really wanted to advance the quality of health of the Guyanese people. I met a pediatric doctor who asked for my help in creating a sustainable asthma education program in the hospital. She



recognized the high prevalence of asthma, especially in children, and wanted to make sure that her pa-

tients and their parents knew how to manage the chronic illness. We worked together to create an informational pamphlet and educational program that will hopefully become a hospital-wide procedure for asthmatic patients. I also met a young nurse who was really concerned with the severity and high prevalence of diabetes and hypertension. Both Type 2 diabetes and hypertension are completely preventable diseases, and they are also reversible. His idea was to educate the general population about the importance of leading a healthy and balanced lifestyle in order to hopefully decrease the burden of these chronic illnesses in the popula-

tion. It is people like these two who I know can and will truly improve the health of the Guyanese people.



My experience in Guyana was truly life changing. I was given the chance to see things that were both heartbreakingly sad and breathtakingly beautiful. I believe that I truly grew in my own understanding of the world and in my appreciation for what I have been given and continue to receive. I built relationships with people from Guyana, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Cuba, England, Canada, Antigua, and Trinidad. From these relationships I was immersed in many different cultures and experiences. I cannot express how thankful I am to both the Nichols and the people at the Global Education Office for making this experience a possibility for me.

Trisha Pasricha
Namibia

Because of the generosity of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I was able to film and complete a documentary entitled, "A Doctor of My Own: The First Medical Students of Namibia," which explores the challenges and unique context of the newly opened University of Namibia School of Medicine. Capacitating new medical schools in Sub-Saharan Africa as a sustainable part of the solution to the growing healthcare crisis has gained increasing attention in recent years. By some estimates, 100 medical schools are slated to open within the next decade. This documentary comes at a pertinent time as lessons learned in Namibia can assist in the development of other emerging schools. The Nichols Humanitarian Fund enabled me to visit and stay on-location in Namibia—both in the capital Windhoek and rural clinics to the north—for a period of 8 weeks, and principal photography occurred during this time. Additionally, the fund provided access to digital filming equipment necessary to produce a high-quality product. To build and shape the success of a school in this environment has a unique set of issues, and by capturing and disseminating this through the medium of film, my objectives were multifold. First, this documentary aims to instruct other schools in Africa who want to learn from Namibia's experience and emulate a successful hospital by anticipating challenges. Additionally, this film may serve as an important orientation and framework tool that provides physicians and specialists outside Africa with an appropriate context in order to be more effective in the role of advisor and consultant. And finally, throughout the production process, become a vehicle to recruit fresh talent and

effort into the development of the school within the local community by providing a sense of legacy, pride, and ownership.



The film sheds light for the first time on context-specific breakthroughs and challenges pertinent to such a school's success that have not yet been equally explored in either film or publication. "A Doctor of My Own" investigates three themes of relevance to current medical education in Africa. The first of these themes is innovations in teaching doctors within resource-limited settings, including a unique "community excursion program" that the documentary explores as part of the student's third year. Designed to inform students of the needs of poorly-funded rural healthcare in their own country, the immersion program provides a singular and, as the film reveals, challenging hands-on approach to student learning.

The second theme is the importance of developing context-specific medical competency training and curricula that reflect the local community. Because of the immense shortage of available healthcare workers, the film furthermore highlights inter-professional learning as a valuable teaching aid.

Additionally, the film analyzes incentives aimed to stem the "brain drain" out of Sub-Saharan Africa. Interviews of

healthcare workers and students in village clinics express that adequate lifestyle factors and availability of medical resources—more than monetary compensation—are a greater incentive to remain working in the villages. The documentary also examines the admission policy's "regional quota system" in an effort to recruit and retain more students from the communities that the school eventually wants its doctors to serve. Despite the difficulties of funding, a sparse faculty, and limited post-graduate training programs, I found there remains a strong political will motivating the school. With the emphasis of enabling schools to confront specific challenges of the local community, this documentary provides a novel and provocative visual examination of empowering Sub-Saharan Africa through medical education.



As the director and cinematographer of the film, I was able to get access to the rural clinics in the Northern part of Namibia where all the 3rd students were sent for a month to do a "community" rotation. I participated in this aspect of the scholarly experience with the students and documented their progress as they became more accustomed to the new environment. I was able to interview doctors and nurses "on the ground" who explained the healthcare crisis from their points of view—particularly, what needed



to be done to alleviate their own burden. I loved filming the students interacting with their first community patients, trying to adjust to more low-budget technology, and witnessing their first natural births. The process of making a film encouraged members of the community to engage with the students, bestowed a sense of pride and ownership into partners of the school, and it also helped recruit additional talent. By filming and participating in these experiences, I was able to get the footage required to tell the story of the need to build the healthcare infrastructure of Namibia from the grassroots, i.e., the medical education system. In Windhoek, I was also able to interview faculty members and doctors working for the University of Namibia School of Medicine who frankly discussed the hurdles of their jobs and what their expectations were for the future.

"A Doctor of My Own" was an incredible experience for me as a student of global health. I thank the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for their generous support in making this happen. The film is currently in post-production and will be submitted to global health conferences this spring as well as film festivals in the fall.

*Mackenzie Phillips
Washington, D.C.*



This summer I worked at the Department of Defense in the Office of General Counsel for International Affairs in Washington D.C. I worked right across the river from Washington D.C. in the Pentagon and it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. The stipend was the funding that allowed me to be able to live in the D.C. area and take part in this amazing opportunity. It helped me pay for rent and transportation costs around the city and to attend work-related events in the city.

This summer I learned an immense amount about the world of international law and foreign relations. It is one thing to learn about current events in the news and in the classroom and quite another to experience and confront the events hands-on. I refined the tools that I have been given in law school and have

developed a confidence in my legal writing style. This experience allowed me to truly exercise what my legal education has been teaching me and what it continues to teach me. I was challenged intellectually every day by issues that I researched. I also learned so much from all the attorneys that I worked with and I gained so much insight into being an international lawyer and the career paths that are possible.

On top of all the legal skills that I learned this summer, I experienced what it was truly like to be a lawyer for the government dealing with foreign issues and governments. I also learned what the face of public service looks like, having every lawyer in my office as an amazing example. This summer solidified my desire after law school to be a public servant, helping our government as it interacts with the global community. Having grown up overseas, in an expat community, living around diplomats as well as military and foreign service personnel had stirred a desire in me to represent the United States Government at an international level and this summer showed me one way in which that is possible.

Every day I reported to work at the Pentagon, and we were presented with problems or questions that our clients, different departments within the Department of Defense, had for us. I was able to work with many different issues and subject areas becoming knowledgeable and developing expertise in atrocity prevention and crimes against humanity. I was also able to work with various different government agencies, learning to communicate ideas and designing solutions to many of the issues we were presented with.

I cannot go too much into detail about my work at the Department of Defense for security reasons, but it was a

great experience working with some of the best international legal experts in the world. It was exciting to be immersed in a job that I never wanted to leave at the end of the day. One experience that I will never forget is attending a tabletop exercise as a representative of the Department of Defense, interacting with international law lawyers from every government agency that deals with foreign relations issues.

Once again, living on loans there was no possible way that I would have been able to afford the opportunity to work at the Department of Defense except through this Fund. It is an experience that I will not forget my entire legal career, and I hope to one day work in the office that I left this summer. A legal career in international law is an exciting and ever-changing field, but with the legal team at the Department of Defense, there is no other field I would rather be in.

Mr. and Mrs. Nichols,

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to work at my dream job this summer. It was an experience that allowed me to develop both professionally and personally; learning that the field of national security and international law is where I want to practice after law school. This past summer was one that I will never forget and for that I am grateful.

Thank You,

Mackenzie

Michael Shannon
Zanzibar

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund provided me with a wonderful opportunity to participate in a service program in Zanzibar. The Fund allowed me to participate in this opportunity by greatly reducing the cost of traveling to Zanzibar and the cost of spending a month at Creative Solutions, which is the great organization that Vanderbilt partnered with to provide service to the students in Zanzibar. Indeed, if it had not been for the generosity of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, it would have been difficult for me to raise enough money to go on this trip, and I most likely would have had to pass up on this opportunity. I am very grateful for the opportunity that the Fund provided me to partake in this great service project. Creative Solutions, the organization that Vanderbilt partnered with in Zanzibar, provides education to many of the people in Mangapwani, Zanzibar. Some of the subjects that are taught at Creative Solutions are English, math, and computer skills. There are classes available for all ages, and there are also preschool classes taught at Creative Solutions. When volunteers come to Creative Solutions, such as the group from Vandy, they send us to some of the local schools to teach in the classrooms and to watch the teachers so that we can help them improve their teaching so that the students learn more effectively. There were a total of nine of us from Vandy who were able to teach both the students and the teachers in Mangapwani.

When we first arrived at Creative Solutions, we met Aida, who co-founded Creative Solutions with her husband, Mbarouk. On the first day there, Aida learned what our general interests were so that she could find the best subject for



each of us to teach. There were two biomedical engineering majors there, with me being one of them, so we were paired up to teach biology and chemistry at one of the schools. Aida made sure that we taught in pairs since it is much easier to team teach than it is to go solo, especially for those of us who never really taught in front of a class before. One of the local schools, Fujoni School, had asked for teachers who were able to teach the sciences, so this is where I taught chemistry and biology along with Shenali, with whom I was paired. For most of the month that we were there, we taught a Form III class, which consisted of students who were about 15 to 16 years old, although the ages varied quite a bit. Learning these subjects was important for the students since they would be tested on them at the end of the year as a part of an examination. When we first started teaching the class, we realized that their critical thinking skills were not as high as they should have been, and a main reason for this is that the teaching style in Zanzibar is traditionally rote memorization, which involves learning things through repetition. This is a major problem in the education of the students in Zanzibar because it focuses on memorization instead of comprehension, and comprehension is especially essential for math and science. We would see evidence of this in some of

the students we taught when we would do an example on the board and then ask them to do a slightly different problem on their own; we would see some of them just try to copy exactly what we had done before, which showed that they were trying to memorize instead of understand the material. Gradually, as we continued to teach them we saw improvements in their understanding of the material. On some days, Shenali and I would sit in on teachers' classes and watch how they taught, and after class, we would provide feedback on what they did well and on how they could improve.

Shenali and I taught at Fujoni School two hours a day from Monday through Friday. After teaching the class for a few days, one of the students came up to us and asked for us to teach him math in addition to the chemistry and biology. Some of the other students wanted us to teach them math as well, so after talking to Aida, we were able to teach them math at Creative Solutions two days a week for two hours each day. It was amazing to see their desire to learn. They were willing to go to Creative Solutions after school for two more hours in addition to the schooling that they were already receiving. We also saw this desire to learn when, after just a few days of teaching the new math class, the students were asking us to give them homework so that they could practice the new math that we were teaching them. While Shenali and I were teaching math and science, the other Vandy students were also teaching English and Spanish. Two of them taught English at Fujoni School while the other groups taught at a different school. The unemployment rate on the island of Zanzibar is over 50%, so the students there understood the importance of learning as much as possible to give them an advantage in getting a job.

Learning different languages is important for them since tourism is a major industry, and being able to speak different languages, especially English, provides a good opportunity for them to get a job in this tourism industry.

Serving in Zanzibar for a month provided me with a great opportunity to learn about the rich culture of Zanzibar along with the challenges that the people of Zanzibar face, especially the challenge of getting a good education. I also got to experience what it was like living in a developing country, and I also obtained a greater understanding of the educational difficulties facing developing countries.

Melissa Tuttle
Washington, D.C.

The Nichols Fund greatly aided my ability to pursue work with the List Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies in Washington, D.C., this summer.

The List Project, in conjunction with its partnering law firms such as Mayer Brown LLP, provides *pro bono* legal advice and assistance to US-affiliated Iraqis facing threat and persecution and attempting to navigate the various visa processes for immigration to the United States. These individuals are overlooked all too often in the media as the United States attempts to move past the War in Iraq, but they remain in serious danger in Iraq from various militia groups or in difficult situations as refugees around the world merely because they worked as translators for the military or another government agency or in some other capacity with the government or a government contractor. There are two program options for these US-affiliated Iraqis: the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) and the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The Special Immigrant Visa was authorized by the National Defense Authorization Act for 2008 to allow for 5,000 primary applicants a year for Fiscal Years (FY) 2008 – 2012, with FY2013 as a catchall in case of backlog or additional applicant spots. Unfortunately, barely over 6,000 SIVs have been issued to date, and the legislative authorization is running out. The USRAP is the traditional refugee admissions program, but Congress has authorized priority processing for US-affiliated Iraqis as well as direct application (rather than the typical requirement of first registering with the United Nations Refugee Agency [UNHCR] first) for US-affiliated Iraqis in Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq. These applications, rather

than being simple and efficient for our allies, are incredibly complex and time-consuming. SIV applications, including the required Department of Homeland Security (DHS) security clearance checks, currently take approximately two years from start to finish, with USRAP applications taking even longer.

My primary duties with the LIST Project were to monitor the organization's general email account and respond to questions about refugee applications sent in, help on current cases formally taken on by the partnering law firm Mayer Brown, write advocacy blog posts for the organization, and research and write a short paper on the current status of the plight of US-affiliated Iraqis in the two years since the publication of List's official report on the topic, *Tragedy on the Horizon*. Of these, perhaps the most interesting was seeing what sort of questions and concerns Iraqis sent in from around the world. The common themes were frustration with the extended time required, a lack of communication between the embassy or the government and the applicant, and confusion about which family members were eligible and how to add family to their applications. Occasionally, however, individuals with especially egregious situations would email, and I would send those along to determine if any of the participating attorneys would be able to formally represent them as clients. For example, I will never forget the family of a former Iraqi laborer who contacted the List email because the husband and principle applicant had been beheaded two weeks earlier, after receiving – and reporting to attempt to expedite his application – death threats from the militia affixed to their household. Mayer Brown has officially taken on their case and is attempting to get the remainder of

the family to the United States, and to safety, as quickly as possible.

In sum, the six weeks I was able to spend with the LIST Project were a valuable and interesting time. I can now confidently say that I have a much greater understanding of the visa processes for refugee immigration to the United States, the provisions for refugees upon their arrival in the United States, and the legislative bases for both of these. Additionally, I am now much more aware of a tragedy that far too few people realize is going on. Without increased awareness and work in the area, those Iraqis who worked for the United States – and put their lives on the line to do so – will continue to be in danger. There is a fairly large population of US-affiliated Iraqi refugees in Nashville that have worked with LIST and with whom Vanderbilt University Law School used to work on a regular basis. I am saddened that that program has fallen by the wayside, and I hope to be able to help restart the law school's work with this refugee community if possible. Without the Nichols Fund, I would not have had the means to pursue work with this small, but wonderfully effective, organization.

Shenali Wickramanayake
Zanzibar

For the month of May, the Nichols Fund helped me travel to Zanzibar with eight other Vanderbilt students. While I was there, I had the opportunity to teach biology and chemistry to high school students in a town called Fujoni. Every day, three Vanderbilt students and I walked 30 minutes from Mangapwani (where we lived) to Fujoni. I taught in a classroom of about 30 students. The school did not have a chemistry teacher, so we taught the students as much as we could. At the end of the year, the students will take an exam that decides whether they can continue their education. I taught for two hours every morning, and at nights I would write lesson plans. It was difficult trying to keep the students engaged, but they enjoyed playing a game in which I would quiz them on material and there was a competition between the boys and the girls to see who could answer first. At first, the girls were extremely shy and refused to raise their hands, but I learned that this was a result of their culture. Luckily, after a lot of encouragement and persuasion, the girls started engaging themselves.



In the afternoons, at the Creative Solutions compound where we lived, I helped teach about 20 preschool students. I taught them how to count in English and Swahili, how to tell time, and how to speak in English. I think the most beneficial thing for my preschool and high school students was that I was able to teach them grammatically correct English. The most memorable day that I had in Zanzibar was the day that I got to take the preschoolers to the beach. It was surprising that although they only live ten minutes from the beach, they don't know how to swim and they are scared of the water. I carried one student in at a time and after a couple minutes they began to relax and started moving their arms and legs like swimmers. I think it is extremely important for them to learn how to swim and get used to the water. Two days a week I also taught math to a couple of my high school students who wanted extra help because their teacher did not know everything in their textbook.

I learned a lot about the culture in Zanzibar and about the Muslim culture more specifically. Almost every morning, I talked to a teacher at The Fujoni School, and I was able to hear about their opinions of the United States. Most of them talked about wanting to come to America, but they believed that the people in Zanzibar were much more friendly. I talked to a teacher about why the students were not able to afford textbooks. In Muslim culture, men are allowed to have up to 4 wives. They end up having many children even though they can't afford to provide for them. This made me appreciate my life, but it made me frustrated because I knew there was no way to convince them that this was causing a huge burden on their country. I learned that it is important to remember that I cannot change their culture, but that we need to find

ways to gain their trust and preserve their culture while helping improve their lives. I also talked to a teacher about the conflict between Tanzania and Zanzibar. Tanzania's government is in charge of Zanzibar, but the Zanzibarian people do not believe that they are given the same quality of education that the Tanzanian people are. There is conflict between the two groups, and it was interesting to hear about it from the source. These are things that I'm used to reading about in the newspaper and hearing about on the news, but it was a great experience getting to hear about it from their perspectives.

On my last day in the classroom, I had my high school students write down what they wanted to be when they finished school. Some of them were so passionate about school that it made my heart break to know the obstacles they had to overcome and have yet to face. Most of them said that they wanted to be teachers or doctors. I also let them ask me one question that they had about me or about the United States. I was able to teach them a little about our culture and hopefully inspired them not to give up on school despite all the pressures around them to do so. I believe that education is the key to improving the quality of life in developing countries like Zanzibar, and it meant so much to me to be able to share this with students who will, someday, have the ability to change their country for the better.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Nichols,

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to go to Zanzibar this summer. I learned so much and I know that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many children. My high school students were so grateful for the knowledge I was able to pass on to them and it was possible because of you. I will never forget the memories I made in Zanzibar and how my experiences helped me grow as a person. Thank you for everything!

Shenali Wickramanayake

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