

A RAINBOW NATION

By
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Though the point is made often at TD, it is one that cannot be overlooked. You cannot get the full experience without going there. I was very fortunate to represent Thornton-Donovan in traveling to South Africa at the beginning of August and I am very excited about the upcoming school year. I think to truly understand this country; you have to take some time to understand its history. We are fortunate to be able to spend a whole school year learning about South Africa in preparation for an April visit and I'm sure it will help make all the difference in getting the full experience.

The history is only a part of what South Africa has to offer. I was immediately struck by its geographical beauty as the plane flew in over Cape Town, with Rocky Mountains cradling a city huddled around a wide bay. The majestic views at the Cape of Good Hope almost distract you from the realization that you are REALLY far from home. I saw all kinds of animals from Penguins and Ostriches to Giraffes and Zebras. I swam in the Indian Ocean in Durban. I was exposed to aspects of the traditional Zulu lifestyle in KwaZulu Natal. And of course, I made sure I heard all types of music.

I gained a much deeper understanding of the country's struggles in Johannesburg and Soweto. Many of us, myself included, have a certain idea of what Apartheid was, but being in South Africa and visiting places like the Apartheid Museum and Hector Pieterse Memorial from the Soweto student uprising, make you realize that it is a struggle which the country's inhabitants have been involved in for hundreds of years, not just the past sixty. There are several different influences that went into making this "Rainbow Nation" that while certainly at odds with each other, still had to co-exist. This is what set the foundation for the multicultural country it is today. Even to only begin to get an idea of what it was like there is an extremely moving experience.

While you cannot speak of South Africa without acknowledging its dark history and the struggle of so many people living there, it is clear that those who live there do not deny their past, but the focus is clearly on the future. All over the country they are preparing for the 2010 World Cup. The entire country is now under construction in anticipation for the hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors that will descend upon their country next summer. It is a very pivotal time for the country which had been an international outcast for so many years. It is ready to show the world the beauty of the land, culture and people that was cut off from the rest of the world for so long. I could sense the excitement everywhere I went. South Africa is ready to present itself to the world and we are very fortunate to be studying and traveling to this country at such an exciting time in its development.