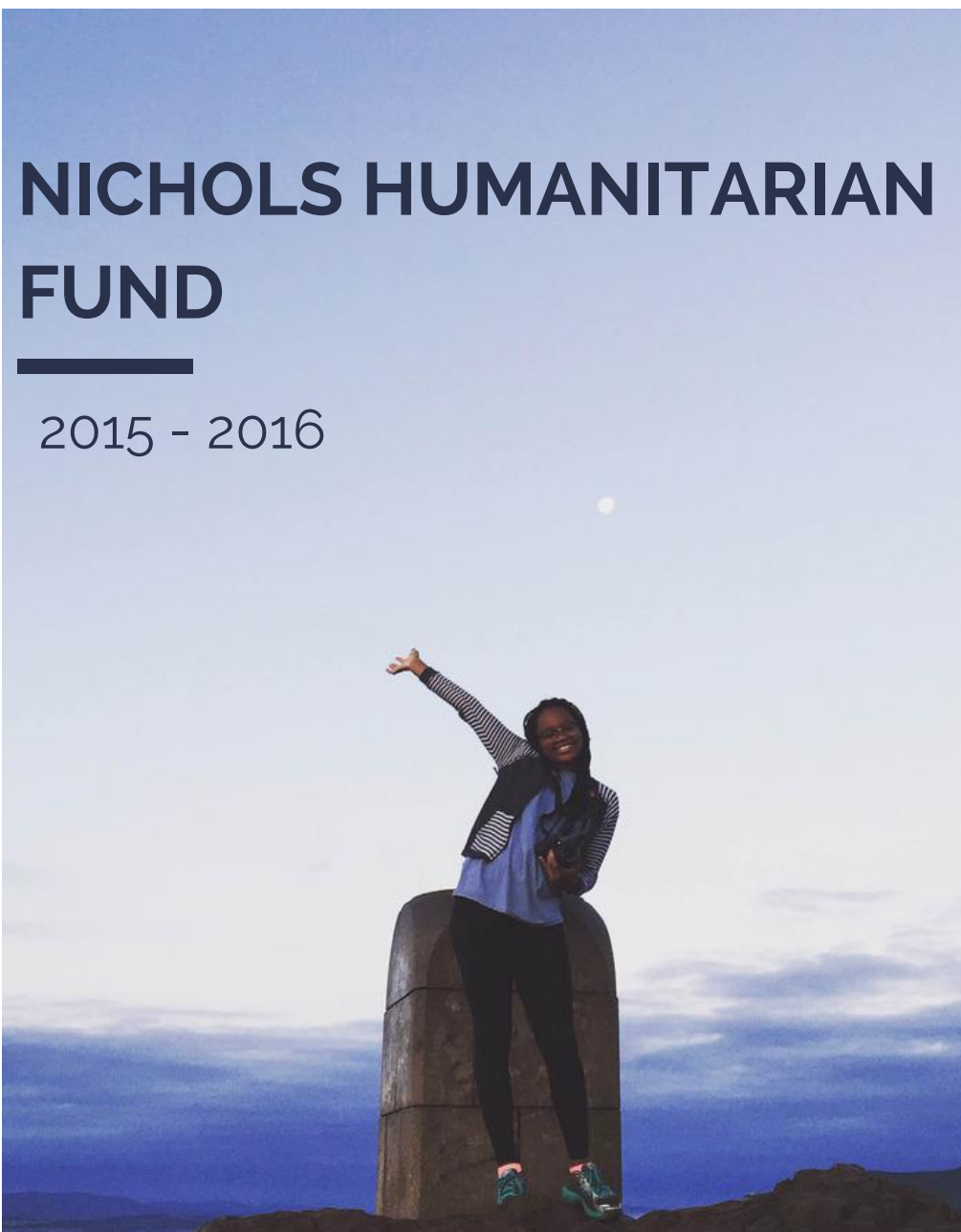




# NICHOLS HUMANITARIAN FUND

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2015 - 2016



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# Nichols Humanitarian Fund

2015 - 2016

## WHAT IS IT?

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund was established in 2006 by the E.C. and Lucile Hamby Nichols Trust, and by Edward C. Nichols, Jr. (JD '70) and his wife, Janice Nichols. The Fund encourages Vanderbilt students to become better citizens of the world and to broaden their thinking by volunteering for humanitarian efforts. The Fund enables students to volunteer for local, domestic, or international humanitarian service opportunities by making support available for education, travel, and living expenses during their time of service. All currently enrolled Vanderbilt students are eligible to receive assistance from the Fund, provided that they are citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Students are encouraged to develop their own service opportunities in communities where they can work to address an area of need. In past years, students have served in communities all over the world including Russia, Nepal, Thailand, Guyana, and Vanuatu. Funding can also be used to participate in established Vanderbilt programs including:

- The Office of Active Citizenship and Service (OACS) summer global service programs in Ecuador, London, South Africa, and Morocco
- The Vanderbilt Initiative for Scholarship and Global Engagement
- Summer Public Health in the Dominican Republic

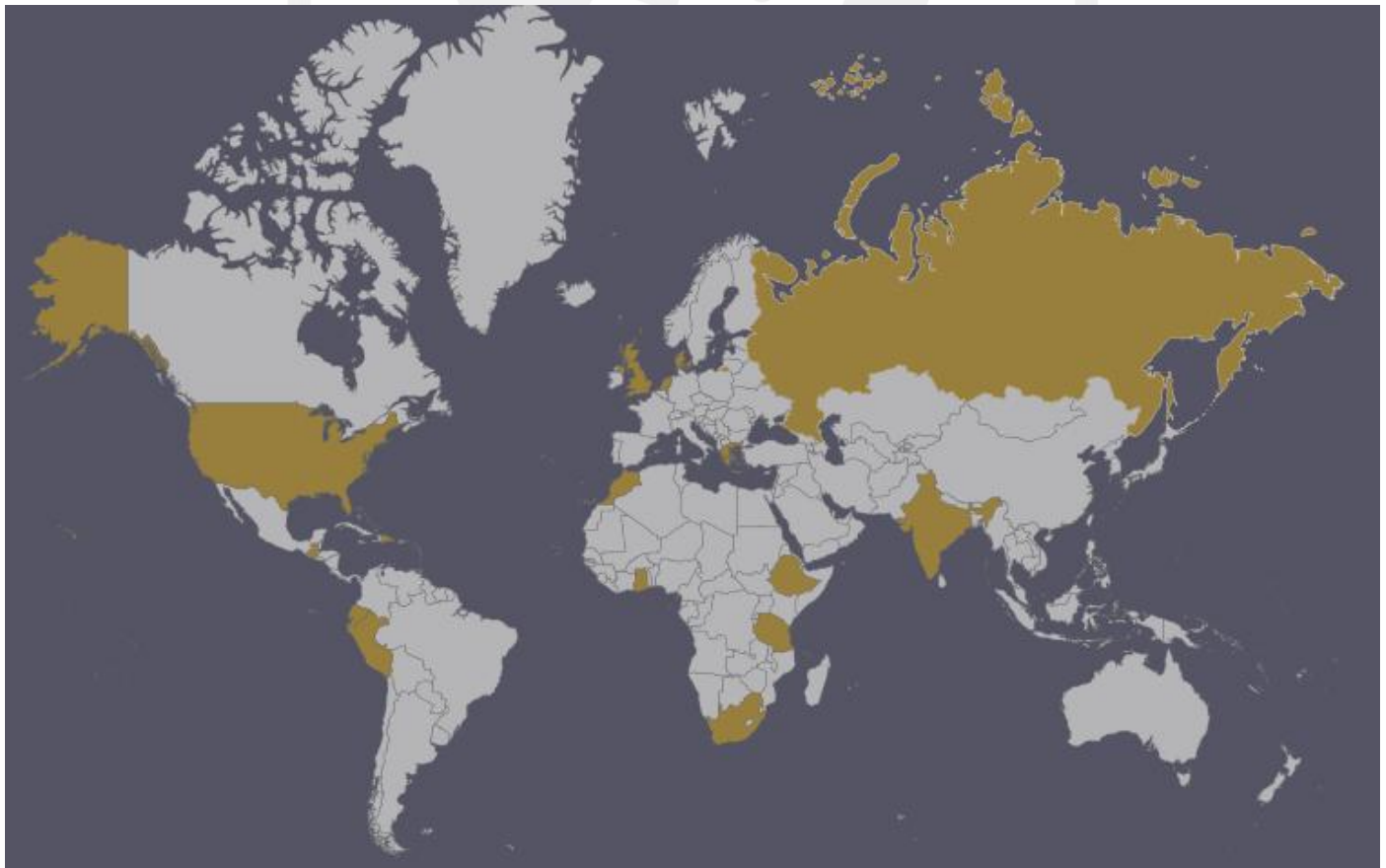


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# Nichols Humanitarian Fund

## GLOBAL COVERAGE

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund Recipient Service Locations for 2015 - 2016



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# Nichols Humanitarian Fund

## THE STUDENTS

Forty students were selected to receive the Nichols Humanitarian Fund Award to pursue humanitarian projects during the summer of 2016. The award enabled students to work with communities on humanitarian efforts including human rights, public health, immigrant rights, early childhood education, micro finance, and environmental sustainability. The average GPA of the 2016 student recipients was 3.5 and the countries where they worked included India, England, Morocco, South Africa, Ghana, Russia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Tanzania, Greece, Ethiopia, Peru, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the United States.

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# NATALIE BRACKET – INDIA

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My time at the Sikkim Happiness Home – supported by the Nichols Humanitarian Fund and hosted by the Taraloka Foundation – deepened my commitment to quality educational access and psychosocial support for young women around the world. These weeks allowed me to implement the qualitative and quantitative approaches I have learned in graduate school, including the development of guidelines for visitors and future researchers at the Happiness Home; the design and administration of an impact evaluation survey for review by Taraloka's board and use in future fundraising projects; and the intent to utilize this data for grant writing and improvements to the delivery of services at the Happiness Home.

At the beginning of this school year, I feel so fortunate and grounded reflecting on an average day in my life in Gangtok. I woke up with the sun peaking over the Himalayan foothills surrounding the Home, joined the girls to make chapatti or momos for breakfast, and sat quietly with my cup of chai on the porch, waiting for the first giggly face to stick her head through my doorway and ask what I was doing today and can we play, can you help with my homework, can we take a walk together? From kicking a soccer ball on the roof of the home with the smallest girl, seven-year-old Muskan, as she worked up her courage to try an English word or two, to having my nails painted by the recent high school graduates as they nervously tittered among themselves and confessed their anxieties about their upcoming college admission decisions to me, the small day-to-day interactions are what I remember the most and what offered me the most joy and fulfillment during my days there.

Personally, my most important take-away from this summer was the opportunity to spend time one-on-one with Sunita, my sponsor sister, to learn about her daily life, and to hear about her dreams and long-term plans. The Nichols Fund allowed me to affirm a relationship that has meant so much in my life, and that I look forward to maintaining for years to come.

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# NATALIE BRACKET – INDIA

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Originally, I envisioned this project as a capstone to seven years of travelling and learning and initially conceptualizing how I can best give back to a world that has given me so much – a process that began when I visited Sikkim for the first time in 2009. Now, I realize that my work with the Taraloka Foundation this summer is another beginning. As the site of my first professional fieldwork, the Happiness Home has earned another landmark place in my heart and mind. Even if the opportunity to visit again does not arise for another seven years, I know that I will be revisiting the outcomes and the lessons from the summer again and again as I complete graduate school and begin my career.

Taraloka's founder will review a finalized report of my findings from this summer's impact evaluation survey project next week. Meanwhile, twenty-six smiley faces will continue to flash through my mind as I think of our interviews while deepening my understanding of ethnographic methods in my courses this fall. While I attempt to master cost-benefit analysis approaches, I will remember that the balance sheet must ultimately weigh providing a quality education to girls who would not otherwise receive formal schooling above all else. When the development experts with whom I work talk abstractly about community-directed programs, I will be distinctly aware of the hard work that Gyatso and the Tibetan families that founded the Happiness Home put in every day.

The concrete outcomes of my project continue to develop, but the intangible takeaways have already led me to endless gratitude to the Nicholls, Vanderbilt University, and the Taraloka Foundation for my return to the Sikkim Happiness Home. Thank you.



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# MARY ISABEL CASEY- ENGLAND

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“Health is about having someone to love, somewhere to live, and something meaningful to do.”

– Cormac Russell.

This summer, I served at Social Action for Health, a public health non-profit organization, which serves the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney. I served specifically with the Patient Leaders Programme for individuals who are interested in health care and want to take a leadership role in shaping health care policy. My project with Patient Leaders was evaluating the individual impact and overall outcomes of the programme to see how the organization can improve its efforts in the future. In terms of the individual impact of the programme, Patient Leaders refined their interpersonal skills, learned more about the National Health Service (NHS), spread awareness of public health issues in their communities, and networked with health care stakeholders. By attending engagement activities and training sessions, Patient Leaders influenced provision of local services, shaped commissioning priorities, and redefined Patient & Public Involvement locally. I had the opportunity to attend many engagement activities with the Patient Leaders including a Health Inequalities Summit and a Healthwatch Community Event. The report I compiled for the organization captures the stories and experiences of the Patient Leaders, and it will be presented to commissioners to encourage continued funding of the program.

During my time in London, I learned a tremendous amount about universal health care and how public health problems affect communities differently. The same problems such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, unaffordable housing, and access to health care still exist across our borders; however, they are manifested uniquely in East London communities. One issue that came up frequently was diagnosing community problems as medical problems. People would go to their general practitioner and present an issue that needed to be addressed beyond their general practitioners' scope of practice. I also learned some of the positive and negative aspects of NHS. All health care services and treatment are paid for by taxpayer funds; therefore, people are not asked for their credit card like in the United States. The General Practitioner is in charge of all health information regarding an individual. The General Practitioner is also in charge of referrals to specialists. This ensures that information is consistent among providers. Some of the downfalls of NHS include: people may not have a choice on selecting providers, 4 hours is the maximum timeslot for an individual to be treated in Accident & Emergency (A&E - U.K. version of an Emergency Department), individuals only have 10 minute appointments with their General Practitioner, and there are not enough doctors in the system. If I could make changes, I would increase time with consultants, reform the process to recruit doctors to expand the workforce, and reduce wait time at A&E by creating more urgent care centers to serve as an option between the GP and A&E.



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## MARY ISABEL CASEY- ENGLAND

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How can I make an impact on my community in the United States based on the impact I have seen others make in their communities in London? The first step: continue to educate myself because I am always learning. Analyzing health services in London has sparked an interest to study universal health care systems in other parts of the world. My major at Vanderbilt is Medicine, Health and Society and I am hoping to get approval for an independent study for Spring 2017 so I can study these health systems formally. I want to see if Health = Wealth holds true in other parts of the world. I want to determine the access to health services in universal health care systems because as I have learned in London, universal does not necessarily mean accessible. Many public health issues are not exclusive to certain communities or parts of the world. They exist everywhere. They are global health issues that are ingrained and would require systemic change. I would like to pursue a career in health care administration and this service-learning experience has reaffirmed my desire and love for health care.

Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, for the opportunity of a lifetime. Thank you for supporting my endeavors to immerse in a culture different than my own. I will remember the many stories, laughs, and smiles that were created in East London this summer. I will carry the lessons I have learned with me for the rest of my life. I am grateful for your generosity and continued support of service learning at Vanderbilt University. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



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# LEAH CHISHOLM- MOROCCO

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During my last few days, I had mixed emotions about leaving Morocco. I was not 100% ready to leave Morocco because I feel there is so much more to see and learn about the country, people, and culture. But I was also very excited to head back to USA because I would be starting medical school and I was looking forward to this chapter of my life. Now that I am back in America, there are many things that I do appreciate more. However, I still hold a strong connection to Morocco. I miss my host family and the children at Lalla Meriem so much. Lately, I have been starting to think of ways to I can keep in touch and stay active with the organization beyond my presence. This is a little surprising to me because one of the struggles we with our service site was trying to find the meaning in our service. As much as I loved interacting with the children, in the back of my mind, I always had the feeling that there was more we could be doing with the organization to solve the root causes of the issue. As I reflect more, I ponder if we could've been of more use helping on the administrative side of things, with organization and creating lesson plans rather than just interacting with the children.

However, even with these thoughts, I wonder if I am imposing an American mindset on the service work. Part of the reason I wanted to do the OACS trip was to experience global service work. I knew that this work would be temporary, and I had qualms about this, but I wanted to have the experience before forming my opinions. Yet, I am still confused in my feelings on the work. In some ways, I feel it was very beneficial and I saw the impact we made in making a child happy and feeling loved. On the other hand, I feel that if I had more time, we could have formed a strong enough relationship with the organization where we could begin to create solutions to some of the deep-rooted, long-existing problems. But even then I begin to question myself on why I feel I can give the organization advice and expect them to take it. If someone from Morocco came America and began sharing advice on changes they would make, would we as American accept their help? The likely response is no. So again, I feel a little stuck in making an opinion about how view the service I did on this trip and if my contribution was meaningful.

One of my goals was to find sustainability within the context of a global experience, and I may not know how to establish that yet, but I do know that this is an experience I would not want to take back. I know that through the reflections, the cohort experience, and my time with my host family, that I have gained so much knowledge and grown much more in my ability to recognize social issues, think critically, and decide my role in society. I know that I have gained the cultural competency that I hoped to gain to help me in my journey into the medical profession. And I know that I have a book full of memories and experience that I can share with others.

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# LEAH CHISHOLM- MOROCCO

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Overall, I enjoyed my experience in Morocco. I found it extremely important to be able to immerse myself in a different culture and challenge myself to communicate without speaking the necessary languages. I also found our reflections to be helpful in dissecting the social issues that exist in Morocco, comparing them to the issues in the U.S. and evaluating our place in addressing the issues in both countries.

From this experience, I learned that global service is something that takes a lot of patience. Even with the background knowledge of the issues, this didn't automatically gain us trust with your service partner. I also learned how valuable it is to respect other cultures, especially when trying to address their wants and needs.

My biggest outcome from this trip was being able to connect with the children at Lalla Meriem despite the barriers that existed. I believe we were able to make an impact on their time and allow them to participate in activities they otherwise would not have. Another big gain from my time in Morocco was the ability to observe social injustices and think about them critically.

As a current medical student, this experience was extremely helpful to strengthening my ability to connect with and understand cultures different from my own. This enhanced cultural competency is a skill that I will continue to use throughout my schooling and career. Furthermore, I wish to continue to explore social injustices and advocacy in light of limitations and barriers.



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# MARISSA DAVIS– MOROCCO

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For my service project, I travelled to Rabat, Morocco as part of the Office of Active Citizenship and Service's Global Service program. The program began long before the actual trip; starting in January, our group did readings and attended seminars on topics as diverse as Moroccan human rights history and the meaning of ethical service – the goal being to enrich our understanding of the country and its culture, and thus enhance our ability to interact with others and contribute to positive change within its framework. Then, in June, we left to begin our six weeks of service in Rabat. Though our cohort's members volunteered at many different sites throughout the city, ranging from childcare to health services, I myself worked at the Fondation Orient-Occident, a public center for migrants and refugees, teaching English classes. I primarily taught the adult Advanced English class, and occasionally helped out with the children's class as well. It was an incredible experience – my students were passionate, motivated, and made the class a lot of fun. Though I was the teacher, I also felt that I learned quite a bit from my students. Our class discussions taught me about the daily lives of Moroccans as well as other people from the African continent (for example, during a discussion about holidays, I learned that Valentine's Day is one of the most beloved holidays in Mali, and is not merely for couples but a day for friends and families to eat, dance, and celebrate).

The program also contained an excursion component, in which we took weekend voyages paired with educational lectures in order to gain a deeper understanding of the history, culture, and the economic/political framework and concerns of Morocco. We had a seminar on the history of the Berber/Amazight peoples, for example, before travelling to the Sahara, and one on the culture of the North before seeing the famed city of Chefchaouen. In Essouira, we visited a women's argan oil cooperative that taught us about the production of one of Morocco's most famous exports. In Merzouga, we spoke with an NGO that worked on issues such as halting desertification and increasing women's economic and educational opportunities. It was fascinating to see the ways that they incorporated progressive social action into highly traditional rural cultural frameworks; for example, incorporating literacy training into job training so that husbands viewed their wives' education as a boon to the household income rather than a waste of time. Even back home in Rabat, we benefited from several enlightening guest presentations; one of my favorites was from an Amnesty International representative who taught us about the history and mission of the organization as well as its role in Morocco and the tension within the Western Sahara region.



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# MARISSA DAVIS- MOROCCO

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One of the great things about English teaching is that, even though I wasn't there long enough to see grand changes, I could still see little by little the effects that my job had on the students. It was so amazing to see students who had formerly had trouble with spelling begin to consistently spell words correctly, and to hear students who had found conversation difficult slowly begin to express themselves more clearly. I am incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to teach at the Fondation Orient-Occident, and though I'm thousands of miles away from the school, I want to do my best to continue its mission even while here at home – this school year, I hope to join Vanderbilt's student service organization Project Bridges so that I can do similar work as I did in Morocco, teaching English while also helping Nashville's migrant and refugee families integrate themselves into and feel welcome within the city's community.



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# MIAH DAVIS- MOROCCO

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Upon returning to America, I can't believe just how quiet everything seems. Sure, there are a couple honks as cars brush past each other on the streets, and every now and then I'll hear a squirrel frantically squeaking on campus. But the hustle and bustle of Morocco is something I never thought I'd miss so dearly. If I think about the busy Medina, I'll also miss the joyful faces of the students I taught, the smell of freshly picked mint, and the convoluted streets that I eventually learned to navigate on my own. In general, I did a lot of that - learning - during my time in Morocco. The best (and perhaps only) way to get by in a country where you don't know the language, the culture, the cuisine, or the expectations is to let your guard down and let your surroundings seep in. If you try to force familiarity, often times you will end up disappointed. By letting myself make mistakes (and learn from them), I feel as if I made the most of my trip to Morocco.

Perhaps the most important concept that I grasped during the trip was the most important one (and the one that kept me safe): don't try to do everything yourself. There's nothing wrong with asking for help. For example, I technically could go the souks myself and attempt to bargain in my poor French (and even poorer Darija), only to get ripped off tremendously. But when I finally swallowed my pride and asked my host sisters to join me at the markets, I was able to learn the "proper" way of bargaining (it involved a lot less politeness), pick up some slang terms, and buy things for far cheaper prices. I even learned how to shave some time off my commute from work to the house by memorizing the twisting path they used to return home. I think that these experiences have definitely translated over into my college experience. The decisions I make now aren't solely based on what my personal assumptions alone. I make sure to ask others around me, whether friends, family, or professors, and take their experiences and opinions into consideration before I make big decisions for myself.

The experiences I've had this summer, from Russia to Paris to Morocco, have made me far more attuned to cultural differences. I think that at the beginning of my trip to Morocco, I was continuously searching for similarities between Rabat and my hometown of Orlando. And of course, when I had trouble finding these similarities, I became frustrated. But once I realized that I should be accepting Morocco for what it was, not what it wasn't, I truly began to appreciate the beauty of Moroccan, Berber, and Arab culture. I hope to bring this viewpoint into my everyday life, whether when I meet people from new cultures or even when I travel again (which, I hope, will be soon!) Not to mention, I have definitely developed a larger capacity for patience. Teaching students English, as fun as it was, isn't easy. There were plenty of times I learned to simply take a deep breath and understand that I had to do my best to remain calm and continue teaching the kids to the best of my ability. My own teaching style must have definitely improved. Currently I am a tutor on campus, and I definitely think that my experiences in Morocco have helped me to become a more well-rounded tutor with a plethora of new and inventive ways to explain concepts (explaining concepts in English with a room full of Darija-speaking students was quite the challenge)!

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# MIAH DAVIS- MOROCCO

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I hope to continue exercising my newfound approach to appreciating cultures, as well as use my experiences to help educate others hoping to travel abroad. There is a big difference between simply seeing a foreign country as an “outsider” and taking the effort to integrate yourself and understand the culture to the best of your ability. Hopefully my experiences can help other people get ideas of how they too can better accustom themselves to new cultures and appreciate them.



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## TERRANCE DEAN – SOUTH AFRICA

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Presently, I am a third year Ph.D. student in Religion at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. My research interest and focus is on Black Church rhetoric/discourse and how it aides and abets black queer identity in the black community. I traveled to Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa to research the similarities and differences of the Black Church in South Africa and how it aides and abets black queer South Africans. I was also curious about the LGBT movement post-apartheid, and the constitutional laws of LGBT South Africans.

My experience in South Africa as a black gay man is no different than my everyday life in America. It is not without fail that in America I encounter racism, heterosexism, homophobia, and sexism. It is complex because each layer of who I am is complicated by a narrative that was formed and created under a heternormative white patriarchal system. It is unfortunate because many South Africans I encountered assumed I had a privilege, some status, some freedom, some economic, political, and social mobility that they did not have. Again, this is complex and requires a long critical essay on each topic and issue. My race, my gender, and my sexuality are all problematic in America. The very equality, rights, and respect that black South Africans fight for in South Africa are the same struggles I continue to fight for in America. My black skin is a threat in white spaces. There are white people who when they see me and run, or cross the street. And, anyone up-to-date with the currents news and political and social climate, one will notice that we as black people are still fighting against a judicial system which criminalizes black people. We march through the streets against the police brutality and killings of black men and women in order to bring awareness to the injustices. And, my sexuality is still seen as vile and disgusting. Many black churches continue to reject who I am. The fight is relentless.

With that, while in South Africa I worked with Justice Edwin Cameron of the Constitutional Court of South Africa to review the constitutional laws, amendments and rulings on the judicial, political, economic and social lives of LGBT persons, particularly black gay South African men. I also coordinated my work with the organization Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA), which archives the narratives, stories and experiences of LGBT South Africans. I also met and interviewed several community activists who are committed to supporting and helping black LGBT South Africans.

Queer black South Africans have a different, yet similar, battle regarding their sexuality. They are ostracized, oppressed, and marginalized out of their communities because of their sexual identity. The LGBT movement is relatively new compared to our movement here in the states. South Africans are fighting relentlessly to be seen, to be heard, and to not feel shame. South Africans are still impacted by an apartheid system that continues to strangle a nation. Thus, sexual orientation is often a taboo subject to discuss, and many are in denial that it exists in South Africa. Many refuse to acknowledge that there are men who have sex with other men, and women who also have other women partners and lovers. Women who are discovered to be lesbian or gay are oftentimes raped because they are told, "They haven't been with a real man."



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## TERRANCE DEAN – SOUTH AFRICA

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Many rapes and other violent acts against LGBT persons go unreported. And, if and when they are reported the police never find the perpetrators, or the victim is made to feel victimized over again as the police tell them that they got what they deserve.

My journey in and around Johannesburg oftentimes made me feel anxious, excited, and nervous. I wasn't sure what I would uncover, learn, or even find. I merely wanted to immerse myself into the country and culture of the people and let whatever unfolded to manifest itself. And, manifest it did. I can say that South African queer people are bold. Fearless. Disruptive. Powerful. Brave. I am not sure if you all even know the amount of courage they exude. But, their courageousness is empowering. Inspiring.

For a month I ventured through the discrete streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town. I caught glimpses and met eyes with many South African LGBT persons. I saw them parading in regal manner as if they knew they wore the crown of glory, and it was deemed upon them by God, herself.

I was able to put my ear to the streets. The tales I encountered in the cracks and crevices of the townships let me know that there were hundreds and thousands of untold and unheard stories waiting to be revealed. Out of the shadows of these corners I sat with black and white queer men who shared their personal coming out stories. They invited me into their worlds, and their lives. I listened intently as they revisited the moments when they told their families, and how oftentimes their loved ones were saddened, hurt, angry, and confused by their coming out. Many experienced being shunned by their parents, communities, and churches. Others had to find refuge in unfamiliar places and spaces; refuge with strangers, or others like themselves who understood and welcomed them with open arms. Like the black South African lesbian who always knew she was different. She was not keen on wearing dresses. She did not want to play with dolls, but wanted to tinker and work on cars. As a teen she dated another girl from her church, and when she finally found the courage to tell her family they shunned her. The church asked her not to return. Her mother felt that the rituals of her tribe "did not take." Yet, she found the strength and power to live in her truth, and to be her authentic self. Now, that woman runs a community center for other LGBT persons who have been ostracized from their families, communities, and churches. The center provides shelter, food, and a place of refuge for those who have been ostracized and kicked out of their communities, and families. The center becomes a new family, a new hope, and a new lease on life. By the way, that woman has also reconciled with her family.

Then, there is the influential white gay lawmaker, Justice Edwin Cameron, whom I worked with for a month. A first of his kind, Justice Cameron lives openly and proudly in his truth. He continuously fights and advocates for the rights of all LGBT South Africans.

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## TERRANCE DEAN – SOUTH AFRICA

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I was honored to sit with him and to hear his story, and learn of his inner-torment in reconciling his sexuality, and his HIV positive status as a sitting justice on the Constitution Court. That takes bravery, an insurmountable courage.

I ventured into Soweto and by happenstance I met a young black South African man who was still struggling with his sexuality. He had not yet identified if he was in the LGBT spectrum. This young man lived in a poor section of Soweto, and he shared with me that he knew the dangers of coming out, especially in his township, and in his community. He lived with his younger sisters, and was their primary care-taker. His concern was more about their welfare, and their well-being. He was not sure if coming out, or disclosing his sexuality would benefit him, or his family. To me it seemed as if he was more concerned about his younger sisters than his own life, which so many LGBT persons often do by putting themselves and their lives on hold. He was sacrificing himself for the greater good. His greater good.

And, then there was the black American I met who was now living in Johannesburg with his South African husband. South Africa is the first country to legalize same-sex marriage. I was able to bear witness to two people who were freely living and loving all over themselves in a country that is still grappling with gay people. Ain't no stopping them, or us! The couple exemplified what it meant to be true to yourself, to live out loud, and to love even in the face of hate. The Constitution that so many LGBT South Africans have fought for was at work in their lives.

All of these instances, and encounters reminded me of many people I knew back home in the states. I knew these people intimately and casually. I have heard these stories many times over, and although the persons may be different, the stories are the same. We are all one. We are all unified in our experience and journey. We have something we share in common, but at the same time we are uniquely different in who we are, and how we interpret our experiences. Yes, we do have a lot of work to do. The movement cannot stop and the momentum must not cease. We have to continue to be in the faces of those who want to oppress us. We must continue to fight for our civil liberties and rights. We have to demand space in spaces where they don't want us, and wish to keep us out. We will not be invisible. We need to be in the churches, confronting the religious dogma that wishes to keep us out, and in the margins. And, we must confront the evils of racism. Racism is not only a practice amongst heteronormative persons, but it is felt in queer spaces. Let us be the example, the standard of what universal love, universal hope, and universal faith looks like. Let us be the truth, the grace, and the force that unites all. We can be the change we wish to see, but it will take all of us working together, building together, and loving together.

I am interested in returning to South Africa as I made contacts with several lesbian and gay black pastors who were running their own churches, and providing religious spaces for LGBT persons to

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## TERRANCE DEAN – SOUTH AFRICA

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worship and express their religious beliefs. While at the same time, the country is known for its tribal community, and familial-ship. South Africans speak 12 different languages, and, thus, many come from a tribe of that language, and native tongue. Tribes have rituals and practices that are not similar to Christianity's rituals and practices. And, the tribe's rituals and practices take precedence over one's Christian religion. Also, tribes are very patriarchal, which means they are also very heteronormative. I am interested in studying and talking with heads of tribes, as well as Christian religious leaders to better understand homosexuality, gender identity, and sexual identity. Most South Africans I spoke with were more afraid to be ostracized from their tribes, which is tied to a larger and bigger extended family.

The second purpose of my research trip is that I am working with the Tutu Desk Foundation. I cannot tell you enough about the many children who are positively affected by the Tutu Desk Foundation. The amount of work they put in to ensure that many students will have a proper desk to write on while in school and in their homes means so much to the young children who receive a portable lap desk. I had the wonderful opportunity to actually visit the plant where they make the desks, which are 100% recyclable, and durable for the children to carry back and forth from home to school. I also was able to make a visit to Caroltonville, a township outside of Johannesburg. We visited a middle school where the Tutu Desk Foundation was providing portable lap desks to over 100 children. The Tutu Desk Foundation provides portable lap desks for students throughout South Africa. Many of the students, particularly in rural areas, informal settlements, and in the countryside do not have a desk in the classroom. They write their assignments from the floor. The portable lap desks allows them to use the desk while in school and at home to do their homework and classwork. The desks belong to each student. And, on each desk is the alphabet, a times table, a map of Africa, a ruler, and a clock. There is also a space for students to write their names and personalize their desks. Having a desk means so much and it affects how a child performs in school, and at home. The desks are \$20, and anyone can sponsor and make a donation for one desk, or 5 for \$100, or 10 for \$200.



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# ZACK ELY – GHANA

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My time in Ghana produced new lessons and new objectives, but before I begin on how they impact my path forward, I am happy to write that my service was fruitful in quantifiable aspects as well. During my short time abroad, I worked with two clinics that treated more than 800 patients. The vast majority of these patients received eye medicine and eyeglasses (for both general sight and reading) as prescribed by the clinics' optometrists. All of these patients lived in rural villages, mostly located in remote regions. Without the mobile services of Crystal Eye Clinic and St. Thomas Eye Clinic, financial and logistic constraints would have prevented those patients from receiving care. As a volunteer, I increased the intake capacity of the clinics by dispensing medicine and testing visual acuity, and these tasks allowed me to interact with hundreds of patients. (I also provided occasional entertainment for the patients by making feeble attempts at speaking their language; they always found the effort hilarious).

I also spent two days at the clinics observing surgeries, most of which were financed by Unite for Sight. On that note, I was able to fund raise \$1800 for Unite for Sight over the summer, 100% of which funds cataract removal surgeries. Each cataract surgery costs about \$25, so the fundraising covered the costs of surgery for about 72 blind or near-blind patients! I spoke with two ophthalmologists at the clinics about their partnership with Unite for Sight, and they both explained that financial aid received through Unite for Sight has increased the clinics' surgery capacities by thousands of patients over a decade-long partnership. Yet widespread blindness still persists in Ghana, and this was especially made clear on the outreaches; I encountered dozens of blind or near-blind patients every day, even in regions regularly visited by the clinics.

While observing the problem and its continued presence, I interacted with patients from various backgrounds: I met Muslims and Christians, traders and fishermen, college students and police officers, and children and elderly. I spoke with a restaurant owner about his perceptions of the US, a lodge receptionist about his plans for college, a 90-year-old matriarch about her extensive family, and a street vendor about his love for playing drums.





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# ZACK ELY – GHANA

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I realized something important over the course of these conversations: these people should not be pitied. I witnessed the same spectrum of personality and passion and ambition among the villagers that I see here in the United States.

As I learned in training with Unite for Sight, a recognition of shared humanity runs counter to some Western perceptions that tend to view underdeveloped nations and their people as objects of pity. But this attitude is not conducive to sustainable and impactful global health. Effective global health organizations, like Unite for Sight, become sustainable by building relationships and mutual respect with underdeveloped communities. For example, Unite for Sight supports the growth and capability of local clinics by providing aid without interfering with the clinics' autonomy. They collaborate with local doctors to perform research on maximizing impact, rather than just telling them how to. They work with the clinics to set affordable costs for the medicine and surgeries, so that the patients retain the dignity of paying for their own health services. The major lesson I learned was that strategies that afford local clinics and patients their dignity are most effective in building sustainable impact.

By collaborating with local clinics in organizing accessibility and forming partnerships with local villages, Unite for Sight has established impact and sustained it for over a decade. I hope to contribute to that impact further by working with Unite for Sight again on a longer-term service trip, and so my next immediate step is searching for appropriate funding opportunities. My new goal is to return to Ghana with Unite for Sight and perform an in-depth research project. I hope to undertake this project next summer, or at least after graduation in 2018. In the meantime, I will continue to reflect on my experiences from this summer and learn more about effective global healthcare through new coursework.



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# LEAH FASSINGER – RUSSIA

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I've studied the Russian Language since my 10th grade year in high school. I finished the major as a sophomore, and yet there was so much I didn't know. The nuances of a language go so far beyond study and mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and enunciation. History, culture, and norms all add up to what we call communication. The five weeks I spent in Russia this summer finally put the cherry on top of the passion I've had for this beautiful language—now I love these people. My wonderful host family in Vladimir: Elena is so like my mother, a strong career woman; and Polina, age 15, is similar to me at that age in her interests and outlook. The food and apartments may be different, but life is life, wherever you are. My Russian host family, their friends, and all the students at the American home had the same ideals to live by: family first, work ethic, curiosity, passions, and loyalty.

I saw many different aspects of Russian life; from the big city life in Moscow and Saint Petersburg to small historical towns like Suzdal to a small farming community in the Kameshkovsky District. Our group of 7 Vanderbilt students plus Professor David Johnson met daily at the American Home. We spent a large portion of our time the city of Vladimir where we got to know students of all ages learning English as we volunteered or they showed us their city. Our routine was to have a Russian language class in the morning, listen to a lecture on any wide variety of topics (from Russian history, to politics, to economics, to sociology, to the prison system, to how slang changes the Russian language and many more subject areas), and volunteer with Russian students who are studying English. At night, we furthered our friendships with the Vladimir natives by making meals, seeing concerts, or simply talking for hours on end (with the help of an English to Russian dictionary thrown in there!).

Through our adventures, I learned patience in a way I had never had to before. Some people who we tried to help seemed hesitant to let us do much for them, even though that was our goal and desire. It taught me to step back from the situation and actually think about not only the help I could give, but also why people might be hesitant to accept aid and how I could best frame my help so that they still felt all the respect I had for them.

I formed bonds and friendships that seem as natural as if I had been born into a family with some of these people. Back in the US, my family is trying to think of ways to get my host family to come to America because they want to know my Russian family as I do. How else can we tell Elena and Polina what a profound impact they have had on my life, my confidence, and my belief that “we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike” – to quote a phrase from the current Apple commercial that debuted with the Summer Olympic Games this August. I also made an impact on older people in Russian who didn't necessarily think so highly of Americans. Memories of the Cold War and the Arms Race are still fresh in history.

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# LEAH FASSINGER – RUSSIA

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There was an old World War II Veteran in Russia whose home we cleaned. We worked tirelessly, and we thoroughly impressed him with our willingness to get dirty. He spoke a little bit of English, and at the end of our time with him, he announced to us in English that he wanted to call Obama and tell him what a good job we did cleaning Russian apartments. This sort of outcome is unbeatable in my book, because we were able to show how much we want to help other people out and that we're not spoiled Americans. We are hard-working and kind, if seemingly carefree and less guarded than Russians as we meet people initially.

As far as outcomes are concerned, there were many. My family, once home, noticed a confidence I hadn't had in new or unusual situations before. But, a month of taking public transportation by yourself in a city around the world, with another language and currency teaches you to think independently. Not only did I learn a great deal about the country and the people in Russia, but I also became a lot more confident in my ability to speak Russian. This stemmed somewhat from the fact that I was able to practice more than in America. However, I also came to realize that if I made a mistake trying to say something, it was infinitely better than staying quiet until I knew how to say it perfectly. I will always be more proactive at drawing out others who are trying to speak English, realizing my own development in a second language, and the courage it takes to jump in and be wrong, and get correction to master a topic. The people I encountered in Russia loved that they could teach me a better way to say something, and it took the pressure off of our relationships the more we could relax and enjoy the mutual discoveries.

When the Maymester was over, my family flew to Saint Petersburg to stay with me for a few days. We went to a traditional Russian restaurant for a nice dinner. The waiter came over, and I was speaking for my family to the waiter in Russian. As he walked away to get our menus, he said "I will grab English menus for your family, but I'll be sure to give you one in Russian." I was so proud. My language skills, though definitely not perfect, were sufficient for the ears of a native Russian speaker. Although our Russian classes at Vanderbilt are amazing, that couldn't have happened in a classroom!

All of these positive experiences, combined with a chance to live on the Russian Hall in McTyiere House—the language dorm at Vanderbilt which is a treasure not many universities have—have brought me to a proficiency I could only have dreamed of just a year ago. I am inspired to travel more, stick my neck out more, and look for common ground. And, yes, being willing to be wrong—but to try—is the best way to learn, because you won't be alone for long. Whether in Russia or at home or on my next venture, there is always going to be someone eager to help and curious, like me, to find common ground.

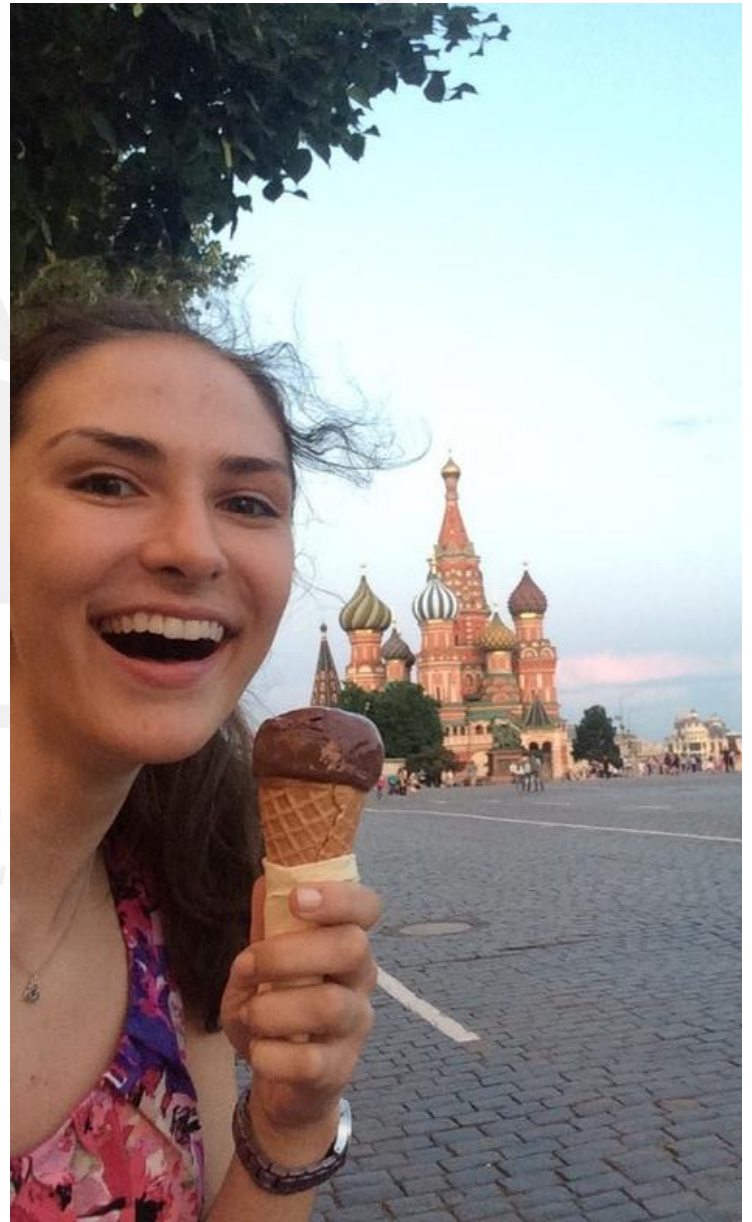


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## RACHEL GILFARB – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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This summer, I spent 5 weeks among the sand and bachata music in what I now consider my surrogate home, The Dominican Republic. Through American Youth Understanding Diabetes Abroad (AYUDA, meaning “help” in Spanish), I was part of the effort to establish a sustainable diabetes healthcare community on the island nation and partook in one of my most life-changing experiences yet.

As a Cuban-American, the Caribbean has always held a special, palm-tree-shaped place in my heart. I saw much of the same beauty and Cuban tradition my grandparents showed me in a new light in the Dominican Republic. My background and upbringing gave me the ability to connect with the Dominican people. This intimacy helped my service work become more effective. As one of the only volunteers able to speak fluent Spanish, I was in on jokes, invited to homes, and lent a supportive hand when needed. Additionally, as a person with type one diabetes myself, I found our work there to be fascinating.

Campo Amigo, meaning “camp friend,” was the first branch of the service trip. Campo is a program where youths with diabetes and their families are able to come for a weekend at a time to learn about diabetes: from the basics of administration of insulin, to the complexity of an anatomy lesson. The time outside of Campo was spent lesson planning and reworking ideas to best serve the community we would be working with that weekend. I was a monitor for Grupo Verde (“green group”), the cohort made up of eight-year-olds and younger. Our oldest camper was an eight-year-old girl with type one diabetes and Down’s Syndrome. Our youngest camper was a non-verbal two-year-old. A typical American child with type one diabetes checks their blood sugar 6-10 times a day at home or at school, while the typical Dominican child with type one diabetes checks theirs once every week at a local clinic. Out of our 12 repeating campers, only one could check their blood sugar by themselves when asked. By the end of our time with them, every camper was able to check their blood sugar independently upon request. Even a two-year-old was able to wipe down his finger with an alcohol swab and cooperate fully with his caregivers. Though a small step in the eyes of us as American volunteers with type one, this was a huge accomplishment because now the campers have more independence in taking care of themselves and are establishing healthy habits.

En El Camino, meaning “on the road,” was the second branch of the program. On Camino, we had one full day of lesson planning and then spent the next six days doing field work at clinics all over the Dominican Republic. I was assigned to be in the Nutrition group, where we taught groups of adults with type two diabetes how to properly control portion size and distinguish between foods of different nutritional value. Our first day of field work made us completely change our approach due to the fact that many of our attendees did not know that rice, a staple food at every meal of the day, had carbohydrates.

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## RACHEL GILFARB – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Furthermore, many did not know that a person with type two diabetes should limit their carbohydrate intake. We used local examples, like tostones (fried plantains), to explain food composition. We used our hands as “measuring cups” to explain in a memorable and reusable way that the size of your fist is the amount of carbohydrate someone should eat at one meal, while a relaxed hand should be the size of vegetables eaten at a meal, etc. We were able to complete our central mission with this change in approach.

These are only two specific examples of our work in the Dominican Republic. I could go on for pages more explaining our work- the different cultural dynamics we had to reconcile in our time working together with Dominican volunteers; the improvement in our Spanish skills and local Dominican colloquialisms; and the conditions of the people we aided through our service. Considering my time in the Dominican Republic, I plan on going into public service and do more service work in and for less privileged countries. Using my neuroscience degree from Vanderbilt University and Spanish fluency, I hope to be able to volunteer with populations with mental health or neurological issues in Spanish speaking countries. I also plan on working with AYUDA, the remarkable organization that facilitated our service, by continuing to fundraise, donating excess diabetes supplies and serving on the selection committee for volunteers hoping to work with AYUDA next summer. I hope to work again with AYUDA in-country to continue learning about diabetes healthcare outside of the United States.



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# HALEY GREEN - ECUADOR

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This summer, I spent four weeks in Quito, Ecuador on a service trip through Vanderbilt's Office of Active Citizenship and Service. With two other Vanderbilt students, I stayed in the home of an Ecuadorean doctor and her daughter while volunteering with children and adults with cerebral palsy at the Camp Hope Foundation. We spent our weeks engaged in service, and we spent our weekends exploring other parts of the country, such as Mindo and Quilotoa.

Camp Hope provides physical and occupational therapy, as well as basic care and some education, to children and young adults with a variety of physical and/or intellectual disabilities, including cerebral palsy. Different rooms within the facility are dedicated to different age groups or activities. I began my time at Camp Hope in the vocational room, where a facilitator devises crafts that young adults with disabilities are able to assist in, such as making shapes out of clay or cleaning toctes (Andean nuts similar to walnuts) to make keychains. These crafts are then sold to benefit the foundation. While there, I made necklaces from recycled CD's and washed toctes, which turned out to be a fascinating cultural exchange. I made idle conversation with German volunteers and the lead facilitator in the vocational room about politics, education, and more in our respective countries. For example, I learned that in Germany, it is typical to take a gap year after high school to engage in some kind of service abroad (and that the government offers financial aid for it), and that there are far more women involved in politics in Ecuador than in the United States. These idle conversations we had while outside washing toctes were incredibly interesting, and absolutely something I would not have been able to experience otherwise.

After the first couple weeks, I spent much more time with the room of older children and young adults with cerebral palsy, where for some reason there were always at least three volunteers, while the facilitator with the young children was frequently by herself for extended periods of time. I changed diapers, transferred students to and from wheelchairs, fed students and brushed their teeth, and occasionally read to them or worked on sorting objects by color or shape with a few young adults. I took away two big things from my time in Ecuador. The first is the bottomless kindness of the people at Camp Hope. While hiking in the rainforest, I sprained my ankle. My entire foot swelled up like a balloon, and I had a slight limp. I had barely been at Camp Hope a week, and I didn't expect anyone to notice or particularly care. Of course, they immediately encouraged me to see the foundation's physical therapists, who gave me an ace bandage and exercises to do. They continued to check on me regularly for the entire month I was there. I was confused, scared, and injured thousands of miles from my friends and family, and the kindness they showed me meant more than words can express. Camp Hope is a small facility with incredibly limited resources, and the people who work there have dedicated their lives to helping people who cannot help themselves, which sometimes includes people like me. The magnitude of their compassion is profound. My experience with it has left me in awe of the people of Camp Hope and the work they do, and the many others who do similar work.



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# HALEY GREEN - ECUADOR

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My second takeaway is the inherently problematic nature of trips like mine. Volunteering was a side dish; the entree was exploring Ecuador, immersion in the culture. Of the four Friday's we spent in Ecuador, we spent three of them away from our service sites, en route to the rainforest or riding the TelefériQo. Even when we were at Camp Hope, I often had nothing to do for an hour or more, partially because of the abundance of volunteers in my room. I had expected to feel like I was doing something meaningful, to be helpful in some small way. More often, I felt useless and confused. My time in Ecuador taught me that volunteering is not always easy, and it does not always leave you with warm and fuzzy feelings. Instead, I left Camp Hope very aware of the limited impact of brief, touristic trips like mine. Now more than ever, I know that the goal of service trips is often no so much the service that occurs on the trip, but what comes after - the shifted perspective, the increased awareness of an issue, and perhaps most importantly, continued engagement in service. I returned to the United States with a strengthened desire to learn the issues facing disadvantaged groups of people and participate in long term service work not only for the remainder of my time at Vanderbilt, but wherever I may go in the future.





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# VENUS GREEN – ENGLAND

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There is much courage and knowledge to be gained from trekking the path that is oft left less traveled. Here, what I am gesturing toward is the multidimensional character in which this service trip affected how I previously felt about volunteering in foreign lands. It was only after a few days that I began to find respite in the uncomfortable nature of gaining experience. This is not to say that my service within these local public health based organizations was virtually non-existent before I arrived in London, instead I found myself going on a personal, yet collective journey with my colleges, fellow volunteers and cohort members this summer in London, England. The knowledge and experience gained via the collaborative projects I conducted with the Maternity Liason Committee and Social Action For Health, illuminated to me the importance as well as the power of mothers voices within diverse communities.

Through training committee members and moms from the local communities of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney, I was able to dispel mythologies of ethnocentric understandings of motherhood, childbearing and their relationship to Westernized medicine. More specifically I witnessed the fragility of strict ideologies that place immigrant women of color as passive agents of social change within the medical establishment. I watched these centuries old assumptions that pathologize women's intellectual capacity to govern themselves and their children as well as their community evaporate into thin air as women from underserved communities showed me how to formulate arguments for why they demanded a swift change in the forms of maternal care offered through Royal London Hospital. I am blessed to say that change was being implemented and that their hard work came into fruition. These women were fearless. They were strong. They were determined to serve their communities and themselves. Day after day I witnessed them concocting and editing what seemed to be endless reports, shifting through mounds of documents, and dedicating time from some of their single lead parent households to host and analyze data from numerous focus groups hosted by myself and other women in the community. In order to avoid confusion, sometimes I would try to stay out of the way of these determined women (who would gracefully organize up to 10 meetings in advance at once!). Then, one afternoon, one of the supervisors over the maternity committee galvanized me to speak up and to be more active, and informed me that I was more than welcome to talk with women about their experiences as well as meet with head nurses from the Royal London Hospital and ask them about the new additions to the maternity care that they planned to provide for these women.

Through the numerous interfaces that encountered with the Mayor of Newham, the committees for maternal health, and SaFH, and numerous mothers in the community, I was able to document information about the ideologies surrounding motherhood at a tumultuous political time in London's economy and society writ large. Of course, like many others I was disillusioned by the grandeur of their health care system and how universal and egalitarian it was proclaimed to be.

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# VENUS GREEN – ENGLAND

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It was only after spending time in Royal London Hospital and with local moms from the neighborhood did I truly begin to see the disparities in health care service and women's access to it. During a focus group session of mothers who experienced miscarriages led by my supervisor from the Maternity Liaison Committee I learned that women experience discrimination based on their skin color, their religion, and their class position. The women from the focus group reported being completely uncared for by their own families who would create myths surrounding the pain that they were feeling from their miscarriage and attribute the pain instead to them "eating too much" or "just being tired". One of the outcomes that I achieved was that in order to implement change in the way that the mothers, families, and doctors interact, I crafted a report using the narratives from the focus group to present to the Royal London Hospital's Head Nurse of the maternity ward as well as several figures from NHS. They reacted very positively to my report and wanted to circulate the narratives and stories I was able to capture. Also, I performed data analysis of the numerous census data reports from the major boroughs of Hackney, Newham, and Tower Hamlets, to provide for future meetings with the funders and to deliver information about the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the boroughs. The graphs and data that I collected and synthesized was utilized at numerous meetings with local organizations who wanted to improve the maternity services of local mothers. The CEO of Social Action for Health claimed that she found it quite helpful to use this information in order to get a better idea of the women who are not being served in each community or who are considered invisible in their communities due to their ethnic and immigrant status.

In conclusion, as a researcher who investigates the social determinants of the disproportionate infant mortality rates that occur within African American female populations, this service work contributed greatly to the importance of maternity services on the wellbeing of mothers and their fetus. As a result of having intimate knowledge with mothers in these hospitals and in focus groups, I now have a better understanding of the manner in which medical establishment, family members, culture, and mothers interact within the communities of East London. After this service trip I strongly feel that I now have the knowledge and skills needed to serve future populations as well as underserved populations in the United States and abroad.



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# ARULITA GUPTA – MOROCCO

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I love these cool summer nights on the terrace. The faded red plastic chairs, my broken French with Mama Leila's animated hand movements, each trying to share a part of oneself -one's thoughts, beliefs, ways of living- with the other.

Slowly, our echoing laughter invites the other women in the family to the terrace. With each interaction an exchange of multiple kisses on the cheek, greetings: "Cava?", "Labas?", followed by immediate gratitude, "Hem du'Allah," all is prospering with the grace of God. My host sister Imaane strokes my hair, examines the empty buckets at my feet, and grins, "hammam?" I nod and grin back. Hammams or public baths are an integral part of Islamic culture. During my first hammam experience, I was quite surprised at how Mama Leila and Imaane, covered up conservatively outside our home, roam bare along with the rest of the women, socializing freely in the hammam. Although I had never experienced communal baths before, I found the turquoise arched domes of the hammam to be liberating in ways. As a pre-med with a strong interest in psychiatry, the hammam sparked my curiosity about whether there is a correlation between communal baths and body image.

I give up trying to piece together meaning in the rapid exchange of Darija between mothers, daughters, aunts, and sisters. With my nearing departure, what lessons will I take back with me? During my last week in Rabat, I discussed my service experience with Thaqafat leaders: Fairouz and Kareema. I really looked up to these women, their strength, spirituality, and openness.

A few hours after my flight landed in Rabat, Kareema asked me to teach English at Attadamoune. I was a bit uncomfortable, but not because of the unexpected request. The transfer of knowledge is a beautiful interaction. I feel blessed to have learned English, a language that currently has the power to transform the social and economic capital of disadvantaged populations and unifies almost 1/4 of the globe. What perturbs me is the need, because the need reflects decades of colonialism, slavery, oppression, and pain.

At Attadamoune, after gauging what the students knew and wanted to learn, we defined several learning objectives. We established that our students had a basic knowledge of past, present, future tenses, and an elementary English vocabulary. Therefore, we focused on continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous tenses and translating knowledge from paper to being able to have fluid conversations. For each objective, we would first teach the concept and then instill it by devising a game. This way, we were able to teach tenses with relay conjugation, countries by playing, "I declare war on..." directions by drawing a map on the board and asking students how they would travel to different parts of an imaginary town, vocabulary through Pictionary, and spelling through Hangman. We only had some semi-functional markers and a white-board, but I learned that all we needed was a strong conviction to teach and learn. I also realized that making learning fun through games was the most effective methodology in teaching. That way, students learn for the sake of learning, and it

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# ARULITA GUPTA – MOROCCO

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empowers them to take ownership of their learning. Additionally, as a representative of the Western world, I came to understand how impactful my interactions with students could be. Inherently, many students have a misconstrued notion of what the Western world represents and often find it more exciting, attractive, and superior to Moroccan culture. Instead of propagating these neocolonialist ideals, it is our duty to be very mindful during interactions and prevent an erosion native culture. After my morning class at Attadamoune one day, I took a tram back to the Medina. Assigning ornate doors and water fountains as markers to remember the winding streets by, I found the Center for Cross Cultural Learning. Eyelids encrusted with sweat, I sat down in a room with Lauren, Karima, and Leah. Karima had mentioned that I would be replacing Leah and working with orphans ages 3-6 at Lalla Meryem. I had never worked with orphans before. Without much conscious thinking about the subject, I was ecstatic. During the meeting, Lauren Moon, the Program Coordinator for the Vanderbilt OACS program expressed a thought that allowed me to grow my concept of ethical service and be mindful about my experience. Children at an orphanage have only had things taken from them their whole life. If I were to come in for one month or even one year with the intent of leaving at some point, I would be propagating that cycle.

Lalla Meryem, associated with King Mohammed VI's sister, is incredibly well funded. The facilities beautiful, the days organized with extensive programing. Materialistically, the children have all basic necessities and even spectacular toys, but nothing and possibly no one belongs to them. On my first day, the kids were drawing on construction paper, so I started making origami paper boats for the group on my table. Immediately, "MINE!," they snatched and chaos ensued. A little one dressed in donated Ralph Lauren and embellished in a colorful pipe cleaner crown, necklaces, and several bracelets tugged at a ragged piece of thread around my wrist. My kalava, a Hindu protection bracelet, was barely noticeable, but he gazed desperately with his dark eyes and kept tugging at the strands harder. There was nothing I wanted more than to take it off immediately and give it to him, but I knew I couldn't for the sake of other kids. The worst part was realizing that I still wasn't filling the void of real relationships. Although there is a stringent schedule of when kids eat, play, and nap, possibly due to my subconscious biases, I was not able to identify goals the organization is working towards such as teaching children how to share or be patient. I am unsure about the tangible difference I made at Lalla Meryem, but it was still an incredible learning experience. Furthermore, children in Morocco are raised very differently than children in U.S., but that doesn't make one way more superior than the other.



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# ARULITA GUPTA – MOROCCO

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I chose to volunteer in Morocco so I could challenge myself. So I could be Hindu in an Islamic nation, vegetarian in a nation where animal sacrifice is auspicious, all without knowing any Darija. I found much similarity in our apparent differences and want to keep engaging in spheres very different than me. As I continue my efforts, I will make sure I am serving mindfully, critical of what implications my interactions have on others. Enjoying the wind run through my damp hair, I am surrounded by terrace chatter. I rest my eyes as the fifth call to prayer envelopes the Medina, forever grateful to have had this experience.



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# SAFIAH HASSAN – ENGLAND

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This past summer, I was given the opportunity to live in London, England for six weeks, and it undoubtedly was one of the best six weeks of my life. The entire experience was a whirlwind—from finding community, making a niche for myself, and working on my project with my placement. Monday through Wednesday I would travel to Limehouse Project, LTD, a center of empowerment for immigrants and ethnic minorities in East London. Limehouse works on several different projects throughout the year, including those surrounding the issues of public health, counter-extremism, advice-giving, feminism, poverty, and social isolation. I had several jobs while I was doing service with them: I was able to assess the work of every advice-giving employee and compile the data into visual material, I helped with the Super Sisters women's empowerment event to combat extremism, and a project that was entirely my own—the assessment of their public health campaigns.

Through the projects on which I served, I was able to interact 1:1 with the residents of the area. In order to do this, I had to have a translator present and I was even taught basic Bangla to be able to communicate the survey to others. Through my research questions, I found much of what we learned prior to the trip to be true—a large health disparity exists among area residents. Many people I conversed with had been referred to the GP (general practitioner) for diabetes. Limehouse got to know these people through advice-giving, the Fit4Life campaign, and the social isolation Luncheon Project. If it weren't for us doing the work we did, many of these residents would not have gotten the care they needed. Additionally, according to my Fit4Life survey, the community members that attended the exercise sessions had lowered their BMI and resting heart rate (therefore their risk of developing related diseases were also lowered) and they had increased their level of confidence, self-esteem, and overall activity.





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# SAFIAH HASSAN – ENGLAND

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Of course, I learned valuable lessons from Limehouse, as well. I was able to see firsthand the hardships of community health and community organizing. It helps tremendously to have people actually from the community themselves, especially those who speak the language of most community members (if there is a language barrier). I learned how difficult it is to put on programming and to also get buy in from residents without enlisting the help of other community organizations in the area. I learned how much quantitative data means for funding nonprofit work. Lastly, I learned that the reason many people come to these events is not even specifically for the event itself, but for the community aspect (hence why it is so important to increase attendance).

However, my lessons did not only come from Limehouse—on Thursdays and Fridays, we met with area stakeholders to get a better image of how public health and healthcare works in the UK and specifically in East London. I was fascinated with how disparities could be so prevalent in a country with a universal healthcare system. My favorite presentations came from the Newham Council and from the Clinical Commissioning Group. Learning the political and financial processes behind public health measures helped put everything into perspective.

Overall, I was able to gain a very holistic experience from the London program. We discussed racial issues, health issues, poverty and gentrification issues, and how the three intersect. I made new friendships that I have every intention of keeping. And lastly, I believe I will use the knowledge I gained both through my career and possibly even my thesis in my graduate program this year.



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# CALEB HAYES - GUATEMALA

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The beginning of my second trip to Guatemala held many possibilities that I sought for ways to fulfill. I would say that the ending holds even more possibilities now that I'm still seeking to fulfill. When I came to Guatemala the first time, I worked with Primeros Pasos clinic on a practicum project for my M.P.H., so, I knew I wanted to return to volunteer there again. My first few weeks in country were spent in Quetzaltenango (or more commonly called Xela, "shey-la") helping to implement Vanderbilt's very own REDCap web-based research application (REDCap means "Research Electronic Data Capture"). This was a lot of fun and a great chance to see some of my earlier practicum work get invested into a new electronic medical record system for patients at the clinic. Now, the clinic can collect and report data for hundreds of indicators regarding its many projects!

Following my first few weeks in Xela, I traveled to Antigua for the first week of of a six week K'iche' ("Kee-chey") language school, based in work of the Foreign Language Area Studies program the U.S. government supports. The last five weeks of the K'iche' school, however, took place in Nahualá ("Na-wa-la"). This was unlike any experience I'd ever had before in my life, and I learned so many things and improved my K'iche' comprehension rapidly. I was able to live with a family in Nahualá and really become a part of their everyday lives. If you want proof of how sweet they are, then see the attached photo of myself with my host mother, niece, and nephew!

Another component to the K'iche' school, however, was to complete a project on the city and/or its people themselves. Initially, I'd had a plan for a study protocol to completed that included household interviews on water supplies and sanitation and health; however, because Vanderbilt's IRB still has not gotten back to me on that protocol, I began with a project in a similar vein that I'd had as a back-up all along. My project was to instead look at water supply and sanitation in the community from the point of view of the water committees (civil-society or community-based, in this case), with an eye toward health and cultural aspects of the work. Then, a brief summary of the Nahualá origin story is in order:

It is said that in the olden days of the city, when surrounding cities were suffering drought and dry rivers, that the river in the hills and valleys of the city continually gave the community its water. Thus the city's Spanish name, Nahualá, is from K'iche': Nawal Ja' (Nawal = "essence", Ja' = "water"). Related to this story, I asked participants of my interviews (who were men who had worked with the water committees in their neighborhoods as either voluntary workers or voluntary officers of the committee) about whether they felt that this story resonated in the water works they had done in terms of cooperation and solidarity between workers. There was and there was not, for two reasons: 1) many committees accepted substitute laborers who were paid by beneficiary homes to do their typically voluntary work (lending itself to a lack of solidarity) and, 2) many people were still sure to give thanks to mother earth, god, and/or ancestors for the water each year, and continually cooperate voluntarily with others in the community (which showed the way that the three common religious values (Maya beliefs, Catholicism, and Protestantism) of Nahualá worked together).



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# CALEB HAYES - GUATEMALA

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For health, I learned about what the committees were expected to do in regards to water quality, which was usually to be certain to provide a sample of water to the local health department for testing at a regular interval. I also learned a lot about what is not done, which will most likely be a central subject to my M.A. thesis research this fall.

In all, though, I have 9 interviews (some done in Spanish and others in K'iche') to go back through and re-analyze, 5 of which I completed just in the last two weeks of my time here in country. All of them should provide a good set of qualitative data to help describe water supply and sanitation in Nawal Ja' and circumscribe what a project on health as it relates to these water features can likely or not likely do. That is a future area I hope to look into very soon.

All in all, as I prepare today to get back to the airport in the capital and fly home (on a ticket you all helped me afford), I just want to say thank you and that I have learned even more about Guatemala than I did the first time I was here in 2014. Your assistance and belief in me and my projects has been a great support. Take care, and I look forward to seeing you at the reception for Nichols recipients in the fall!



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## AUDRIANNA IRVING – SOUTH AFRICA

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What is more important the places that you have been or the people that you have met? I would like to think that those two entities work interconnectedly. I would not have been able to meet the people that I have met unless I had went to those places. This summer I was able to spend six weeks in South Africa, with one week in Johannesburg, four weeks in Port Elizabeth and one week in Cape Town. Through my time there I volunteered with the non profit Missionvale Care Center. Missionvale Care Center (MCC) is located in Port Elizabeth in a township called Missionvale. The function of MCC is to be a haven for the community. During my time there I was able to work in the community garden, where members of the community could grow their own vegetables, the food pantry, where we gave food parcels as well as bread and soup to the members of the community, the clothing warehouse in which TOMS were donated to the center and the primary school in which I was able to prepare over 300 sandwiches daily for the students that attended the school as well as the children in the community. Each facet of MCC allowed me to see a different aspect of the community. In the garden I was able to understand the struggles of being a young man in South Africa as well as how HIV/AIDS have plagued the community. Young South Africans are so afraid to get “the sickness” that they won’t engage of any type of relationship with one another for fear of it going too far. In the food pantry I was able to see first hand of how hunger is widespread in the community. Food parcels, which consists of 5 bags of tea, a can of beans, a can of meat, a bar of soap and a bar of detergent, are given out to qualifying families. They are only able to get this parcel once a week and many times this is the only food that is coming into the home for the whole week.

The clothing warehouse and the primary school are the two areas that I spent the most of my time and through these two outlets I not only learned a lot but I felt as if I truly made a difference. The clothing warehouse is comprised of 3 older ladies, the community refers to them as aunties. These three ladies took me in as their own. The warehouse is a cold dusty place that doesn’t get many volunteers but they impact the entire community. In two days I was able to sort and go through over 500 onesies that I was able to give out to the community the following week. Each day people would come with holes in their shoes, clothes being too big or just not properly clothed. It was our job to find clothes or mend their clothes. One instance that stands out is the day that a mother came with her son to get TOMS shoes. The little boy was about 7 years old when he came to us, and he was barefoot. When we asked him what size shoe he wore, he just looked up to his mother, the mother assumed a size. We fetched the shoes and soon realized that they were too small, but the boy didn’t care. This was his first pair of shoes and he was overjoyed by the fact that he didn’t have to be barefoot anymore. When we asked to exchange his shoes for the correct size he was so hesitant, he kept trying to tell us that it didn’t matter that they were tight, he just wanted the shoes. We got him the correct size but that will always stick with me. A child was going to accept shoes that clearly hurt his feet just to have a pair of shoes, his first and only pair at seven years old.



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## AUDRIANNA IRVING – SOUTH AFRICA

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My time in the primary school helped solidify what I want to do, as an American, to help South Africans. In South Africa the majority of the children are taught in their native language yet when they are ready to apply for college they are tested in English and college is taught in English. You now have a discrepancy. Students don't start learning English until high school and they are expected to be proficient enough in the language to be able to pass a college entrance exam. This has caused me to want to expose children to English at a young age. If they are able to learn English at a younger age, they will then be able to grasp it better which will allow them to score higher on their college entrance exam, which then proceeds them to studying in university and being more educated. Education that can help them better their community and themselves. I have already started this effort, I am purchasing english as a second language books in order to send specifically to Missionvale Care Center and am looking for sponsors to donate ESL books as well.

I would not have been able to experience everything that South Africa has to offer if it was not for the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. I would not have truly grasped what it means to be a global citizen and realized that we are all our brothers and sisters keeper. Thank you so much to the Nichols family and the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for affording me this amazing life changing opportunity.



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# ALLISON KATZ – TANZANIA

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I am beyond grateful for my time in Tanzania, which would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the Nichols Fund. I cannot believe how incredibly fast my two months volunteering in Tanzania flew by. It was an unforgettable experience in which not only could I make an impact on the people I worked with and got to know, but an experience in which I was truly impacted in such a positive way by each and every moment.

Each day I spent the morning and the early afternoon teaching at Charity School in Arusha, Tanzania. My first three weeks there I was in the grade two class and my last five weeks I was in the pre-unit class. I helped teach and work one on one with students in all of their daily subjects including English, reading, mathematics, science, and handwriting. After school and on the weekends I would often go to an orphanage or a baby orphanage. At the orphanages I would help the children wash their laundry and dishes and would also play soccer, dance, and hang out with them. At the baby orphanages, I would help feed, bathe, and play with the babies.

I also had so many other amazing experiences during my time there. I went to an NGO called Positive Love, which is a jewelry cooperative for ladies who have HIV. Additionally, I had the irreplaceable opportunity of forming strong, genuine relationships with teachers, students' families, and people I passed daily on my walk to school. One specific example of a really strong relationship that was built was with my school's director. I had the chance to go with him to his Maasai Village, which is one of the native tribes in Tanzania. I took a two-hour public bus out of town, and then we walked one hour into the bush of Tanzania until we encountered his village in the middle of the mountains. The village was made up of his extended family, each with their own Maasai hut. It was amazing to see the beauty of their simple, traditional lives and I was so welcomed by them all.

I have learned more than I could have imagined from my time in this amazing country. One lesson I have learned is that happiness does not necessarily come from what many people in America and other parts of the world give importance and value to. In Tanzania I saw more smiling people than I have ever seen in a place before. I met people who were truly happy with their lives, yet they lived with their entire families in a one room shack, had one outfit, one broken pair of shoes, and struggled to afford food and school fees. Many people at home, including myself at times, often become caught up in superficial and material things believing that those types of things bring about happiness, but I have truly learned that genuine happiness is about more than that. The people who live simple lives with the people they love seem to live the most beautiful and happy lives.

Another lesson that I learned is the importance of the smaller parts of volunteering abroad. It is important to acknowledge that some impacts may be small, but nonetheless significant. For example, helping one student understand addition or learn a new letter, or even just putting a smile on a child's face.



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# ALLISON KATZ - TANZANIA

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Through my time in Tanzania, I was able to have an impact on the students with whom I worked with. I was able to teach the class as well as work with them individually, which is a type of attention that they rarely or never receive in school there. I was also able to share some teaching methods with teachers there and they were able to share some with me. I was able to brighten the days of people as they simultaneously brightened mine. For example, many of the orphans in Tanzania do not receive very much attention and love. Often times the orphanage's director does not care for the children properly and may be neglectful or selfish. By going there and spending time with the children, I do not solve their problems but I feel I was able to help make their day a little happier as they also made mine happier too. I met some of the most resilient people who remain happy and strong throughout some of the most challenging circumstances.

After my eight weeks of volunteering, I decided extend my stay and to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa. During my week climbing up the mountain, I had so much time to reflect on the beauty of the country, its people, and my time here. I am so thankful for my time spent in Tanzania and cannot wait to return one day really soon.



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## PETER KENT-STOLL – ENGLAND

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I came into the program with my sights on analyzing the politics of neoliberalism, that is, the increasing conflation of private and public institutions, ideologies of personal responsibility, and the growing inequalities that come with these practices and ideologies. Most especially, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how the processes and ideologies of neoliberalism create ideological contradictions and unequal health outcomes in the U.K. and U.S.

While the service project I carried out in collaboration with the Hackney Council for Voluntary Services did not focus specifically on health, it did focus on the tensions between localized and centralized structures of government. With austerity cuts in the UK, coupled with a growing ideology that government should not promote a “culture of dependence,” those working at the grassroots level in the third sector who come from and who serve underserved populations face an urgent problem: how do you access resources within the very structure that is increasingly denying you of key resource and rights?

I began to learn about some of these strategies used to face this urgent problem through my service project assignment of writing an evaluation report for the first year of the Delivering Change program, a three year project ran by Hackney CVS’s Senior Organizational Development Manager, Kishore Kanani. The purpose of the program is to help small, grassroots organizations, namely those represented by and who serve people of color become equipped with tools in financial management and monitoring and evaluation in order to become more effective at securing funding and providing services.

The project challenged me to ask what my role as a social scientific researcher should be. If I gained more from the project (being able to more explicitly explore questions related to neoliberalism, race, and responsibility within the evaluation project) would this mean that the program would have less to gain? At what point does evaluation work become research for generalizable knowledge?

The most direct outcome of my service experience is that I was able to complete 11 interviews with leaders of grassroots organizations in the borough of Hackney. I utilized data from these interviews alongside quantitative data regarding how leaders ranked their organizations’ progress in order to compose the evaluation report and create a template and interview guide that future interns and researchers can draw upon. Funders of the Delivering Change program will be reviewing the report in September, so I am confident that this report may assist in securing funding for future years of the Delivering Change program.

Furthermore, my supervisor was so pleased with my contribution and with our collaboration that he hopes to recruit future students from Vanderbilt to continue to work on other components of the project with him next year.



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## PETER KENT-STOLL – ENGLAND

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My time at Hackney CVS has helped me gain the confidence needed in order to work as an independent researcher in the third sector in the future. While I aspire to continue to work within academia, I also want to continue to look for ways to collaborate with and build strong professional relationships with people and organizations outside academia as well.

I want to send a warm thank you to Ed and Janice Nichols for supporting me and making this experience possible. The lessons learned and knowledge gained over the long term are invaluable.



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## HEEBONG (SCOTT) KIM – GREECE

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I went to Greece with preconceived ideas with the vague expectation of dread. Whenever Greece is talked about, it's mentioned only through censure: the European Union's member with the highest amount of debt, Athens' public health crisis, and its inability to deal with (or even purposefully not dealing with) refugees. However, I was greeted with a starkly different image: endurance.

For the first part of my grant, I worked in a family-owned vineyard in Naoussa through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF). Because of my race and horrible Greek-skills, many Naoussans asked me where I was from and why I was in their town. After telling them about which vineyard I was working at (that they all seemed to know) and that I was there for a school project, I was enthusiastically enveloped into the town's social scene, many inviting me onto their farms and homes. I was able to conduct nine interviews with either individuals or groups in Naoussa and Thessaloniki and five in Athens.

During my time, I often engaged in the reflection: why am I here? I went with an explicit goal: to conduct interviews to understand and analyze resource distribution and subsequently improve upon such distribution through practice theory. However, there was an underwritten goal that was implicit in my applying to the Nichols Humanitarian Fund: to become a better global citizen as well as perhaps altering my ideas about service. My service, at first, gave me a sense of fulfillment in that each day had certain tasks and goals, which I completed: interview the Papadopouloses, rearrange the grapes, move boxes, or file paperwork. The sense of fulfillment of seeing a stack of scattered boxes being formed into a tight cube is ineffably gratifying. But this tertiary, physical work couldn't just be it, right? Even with the higher order goal of producing this report, why am I not feeling like I'm doing anything valuable?

Throughout my life, I was rewarded for the headache that accompanied activities solving complex math problems or stumbling on some higher-order issue or conclusion in humanities texts. Everyone around me, from my peers to parents, valued me for not just being able to do those above activities, but the results that it produced: admission into prestigious universities, supportive scribbles from professors on top of papers, and, most importantly, a sense of hope, instead of resigned dread, for my future. How could anything that didn't produce this head-pounding possibly be valuable?

But my idea of value confounded with a separate quality: results. But this false equivalency only worked when I lived in a high stakes world. But while I was stacking boxes, I arranging tight cubes, I realized that I "made it." Not everything I do or do not do has a crushing reward or punishment anymore, so my definition of value had to change with the situation I was in. Ultimately, it did. Why do I do anything anymore? To help myself? Of course, but with a constant eye towards others.

But this was not a self-realized lesson. The Greek government, after its financial crisis, is underfunded, and thus, has been downsized, crippling its infrastructure for distributing the very grants that I was trying to study.



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## HEEBONG (SCOTT) KIM – GREECE

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One man whom I saw (but did not interview) in Veria's clerical office was screaming because he was unable to qualify for a 9,000 Euro grant because they did not have enough clerks to audit his receipts for his refrigeration room. Another group of Thessaloniki college students whom I interviewed talked about the volunteer-run refugees camps, which the government did not fund because of their mobile, ephemeral nature. Greeks stepped in where the government did not; if they couldn't, they had to deal with the harsh reality of it. The frustration of picking up the shortcomings of one's government was contagious, and while interning at DESMOS, a nonprofit that distributes aid within Greece's main cities--another instance of the private (or NGO) sector picking up where the government's duties, it slowly motivated to type faster, work harder, and feel the link between my hands and those of my foreign neighbors'.



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# SAMANTHA LONG – RUSSIA

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This summer, I spent four and a half weeks all the way across the world. From May 15 to June 15, I lived, learned, and worked in the ancient city Vladimir (Владимир) in southeastern Russia. The course's purpose was three-fold: language learning, community service, and cultural understanding. The first was achieved via hour-long lessons at the beginning of each day, and the community service took place in the afternoons, at several organizations (the Karl Liebknecht Orphanage, the Vladimir Youth Health and Education Center, the Vladimir Home for Veterans, to name a few) throughout the city; the last, however, was woven into every interaction, every service project, and every relationship formed throughout the Maymester, and did as much a service to each of us involved as the formal volunteer projects. This miracle of bringing people of two vastly different cultures into close contact and watching them learn about each other and themselves was most readily apparent in my relationship with my host family.

There is little understanding between our two countries. Upon telling my relatives and family friends that I was planning on going to Russia and studying Russian I was met with anywhere from shocked looks and raised eyebrows to concerns about my safety. American – Russian interaction is not very common, and thus, people are naturally wary. I was no exception to this rule, and was filled with nerves the entire 20-hour journey to our host families' apartments.

As this trip did not require knowledge of Russian, I'd been subconsciously operating under the assumption that all of the host families would speak fluent English, and I rediscovered that, as an American traveling, my arrogant expectation was that most Europeans I'd meet would understand me on some level. However, I soon discovered my mistake; as I was introduced to the family that would care for me for the next month, I was greeted by my host mother (Vera) and sister (Polina), both beaming, and both with heavily-accented, "Nice to meet you!"s. That was some of the last English I would hear from them, and, while the revelation that they spoke very little of my language terrified me for a few long seconds, the whole family was so welcoming that soon it almost didn't matter. We figured out that we did not understand each other fairly quickly, and then reverted to gestures and cognates, and the little English Polly had learned in school; it was amazing how smothered with enthusiasm and hospitality I was, despite the language barrier. After Vera and her husband Ivan had gone to bed, Polly and I sat awake on the computer, having a conversation via Google Translate that involved celebrities, American schools, and her teaching me some Russian words. They all were so immediately kinds and welcoming that I went to sleep that first night less worried about living with strangers than I had been even when I thought we would share a language.

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# SAMANTHA LONG – RUSSIA

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This pattern of initial-wariness-of-the-unknown-is-overcome-by-friendliness-and-compassion was echoed by just about every interaction I had with each Russian I met. I was taught about Russian politics, Russian religion, Russian history, the Russian language, and more in classroom settings, but the lessons I learned most thoroughly, the skills I will be able to use for the betterment of others were learned and acquired through the experiences that will stick with me as a person: the ability to communicate and empathize with people so different from you that you can't even understand each other's language, the experience of making a friend from a country that many still consider 'the enemy,' the value of experiencing a culture with much more history and richness than your own, the feeling of serving people despite prejudices on both sides. All of those things I will carry with me, as will those I met while in Russia carry similar wisdom with them.

As far as the future goes, I am extremely interested in continuing to learn about and returning to Russia, particularly to visit Moscow (which is one of the greatest cities I've ever visited) and my host family (whom I still miss terribly). I am now pursuing a Russian minor, and, as I am likely to take a gap year between my bachelor's and master's degrees, my time in Vladimir has inspired me to pursue a Fulbright scholarship to Russia in order to study music with the Moscow Conservatory and/or teach English.





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# REDIATE MOLLA - ETHIOPIA

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This summer, I traveled to Ethiopia to work for Selamta Family Project, an organization that provides permanent homes for orphans and disenfranchised women in the community. My role was to serve as an SAT tutor for students poised to study in the U.S; a social media safety instructor for those with Facebook pages; and an “unofficial” ambassador for those interested in all things related to United States. Job responsibilities for the latter included general mythbusting and trying to make sense of the American presidential election, to name two.

According to The Huffington Post, almost 5% of Ethiopia’s total population is an orphan. Orphanages are often overcrowded and unequipped to handle even their existing capacity. Additionally, only 17% of the general population ends up finishing secondary school. Even though orphan high school graduation rate data is not available, without a robust support system, the odds are already stacked against them; attaining any sort of social mobility for this subset is no doubt incredibly difficult. Selamta Family Project aims to fill this void. 10 kids are randomly placed into a house identical to those in the neighborhood along with a “house mother,” a disenfranchised woman in the community, who takes care of food and other housekeeping matters. Beyond the immediate community of their homes, Selamta also provides an administrative team to make sure all of the orphans’ financial and general wellbeing needs are met, whether it be new clothes, a visit to the museum, or even a meet-up with the most famous Olympian in the country!

As mentioned above, my primary role this past summer was to help some of the Selamta students through their impending SATs. During my time in Addis, I was tasked with creating an engaging curriculum that best suits not only the short period of time that I’ll be there, but also the students’ formal school system. The latter proved to be a challenge. The kids that I tutored did well consistently in the math section of our practice SAT sessions ; however, I quickly realized that the passages in the reading section required significant knowledge of American idioms, slangs, pastimes -- all of which just cannot be taught over a four week period. This was very difficult for me: seeing how hard the kids were working on their reading but knowing that they fell a little short because, for example, they didn’t know “to fall short” referred to inadequacy rather than, say, a short person falling, was difficult to stomach. My parents moved us from Ethiopia to get a good education, and I never truly realized how much I benefitted from a Western curriculum than this summer. The countless hours spent poring through SAT books definitely played a huge factor in the score that I received, but learning in a traditional American classroom and being surrounded by Americanisms for six years certainly did not hurt.

Beyond the SAT’s, my favorite role was actually one that came up after I arrived in Ethiopia. Because affordable internet is becoming more accessible throughout the country, the Selamta kids, like millions of their other Ethiopian counterparts, have started using Facebook unsupervised.



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# REDIATE MOLLA - ETHIOPIA

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Thus, the administrative team wanted me to teach a social media safety course in order to enable them to use social media in a safe manner. I didn't think that the kids would benefit from a big lecture on every minutiae of the big no-no's of Facebook, so I thought of making it a little bit more interactive. I decided to create a Jeopardy game (pictured below), with categories spanning from "Relationships on the Web," Games and Fun," and "Instagram" to cover a broad range of issues they may encounter. We walked through some possible scenarios through behavioral questions, including dealing with unrequited love, annoying friend requests, and even some hard hitting issues such as adult content and harassment on the social media site. Though they were a bit apprehensive at first, they quickly became engaged and competitive for the prize -- a \$25 prepaid phone card.

I think beyond all, I am most grateful that I had a chance to really connect with the kids. I speak Amharic, Ethiopia's official language, and that skill has undoubtedly been my most valuable input at Selamta. The kids seldom see someone who looks like them whenever American students come to volunteer, and they have always considered the language barrier as an obstacle from really getting to know one. Beyond the Jeopardy game and the SAT sessions, (neither of which, by the way, would have been possible if I were not able to communicate with the kids in their native language), what I will always remember are the 4+ hours of conversations about Ethiopian musicians, film, politics, life as a diasporan, and so much more to count.



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# MORGAN NEWMAN – ENGLAND

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My time in London pushed me to expand my global perspective from different views and through different lenses. I have had several experiences traveling the world and experiencing diverse cultures, but no matter how “similar” a new country is to the United States it is still wildly different. London is a unique city that can challenge the views of even the most open-minded of people. London has a diverse culture that is unshared anywhere else in the world. I was able to work directly with the government council in the London borough of Newham, which is known to be the most diverse place in the world for its size. While I have been exposed to many walks of life I have never gotten the chance to see everyone of the world walk the same paths. If you could think of every ethnic background and race on this planet chances are there is someone with that background in London. In what seems to be an anomaly in this world, the people of these various backgrounds all, for the most part, peacefully cohabit with each other. Even amongst the vote in favor of Brexit that came days before our group’s arrival, London was one of the few cities in England that overwhelmingly voted to stay. It’s like being a blue city in an all red state (or vise-versa)!

My internship in London was at the Newham Borough of London City Council. I worked with the public health department on the Annual Public Health Report. For 2016, the focus or theme of the APHR was the Women’s Health Care. In Newham women die younger than men and spend more of their life sick. The former is quite unique to a population; in most societies women live longer than men. Most research had been done prior to my arrival but I was given the task of going to General Practitioners (GPs) and interviewing women on their health and experience with healthcare while they waited to be seen.





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# MORGAN NEWMAN - ENGLAND

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Often times when you think of a European health care system you have assumptions that it is much better than America's, that it is fair and just and surely not as corrupt as our system. While I would never go so far to say that the UK's health care system is as "messed up" as America, it does come with its fair share of problems. Throughout my time in London I used these new experiences to widen my knowledge and understanding of both the United States and international health care systems. My goal in London was to expand my global perspective through experiences I would have living abroad. Never did I expect to be reading scholarly articles about the health care system in the UK or learning so much about the borough of Newham, these gained intellectual experiences have opened my mind to new interests that will surely translate over to my academic life and performance at Vanderbilt. Thank you so much helping fund this amazing opportunity to live and work abroad. I learned an immeasurable amount about healthcare systems, different cultures as well as learning a great deal about myself, and how I handle new and exciting experiences.





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# KARIN OH – GHANA

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Thanks to the generosity of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I was able to travel to Accra, Ghana, to volunteer with Street Library Ghana through Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa (VPWA). The mission of Street Library is to bring reading to children by planting reading hubs in underserved communities. I served as a Literacy Clinic Officer for the Pokuase and Anoff-Damang reading hubs. This involved reading independently with children, leading reading groups, and assisting with the setup of the libraries by sorting books according to genre and reading level. In addition, I was able to lend my hand to launch the Pokuase Street Library.

I arrived at the perfect time; my first week, I worked with the staff to set up the Pokuase Street Library by creating designs and sorting books. I produced 12 different designs for the inside of the Pokuase Street Library using Adobe Illustrator and Adobe InDesign. I tailored the themes of the posters to the children's interests. I kept the colors playful but also aimed for clean designs. I also wanted to remind the children of the beautiful country they live in, so one of my posters features a landscape that reads, "Books are the plane, the train, and the road. They are the destination and the journey. They are home." I was inspired by the vast layers of green mountains I spotted from my commutes through Accra. I hope that this illustration helps the children feel comfortable in this new, perhaps unfamiliar environment. Other messages on the posters encouraged the children to read every day, to not be afraid to make mistakes, to learn something new every day, etc. The next week, we were able to open the library, and I created an appealing electronic flyer to spread the word about our library. In addition, I helped edit the library registration form which parents will use to sign up their children for the library. Specifically, I added sections in which parents state how they will pay their library fees.

Although most of my work directly impacted the suburb of Pokuase, I also was able to reach out to entrepreneurs across the globe. I compiled and designed the Street Library Manual for Entrepreneurs and the User Manual (digital) into one comprehensive document, which will guide entrepreneurs and organizations interested in starting their own street libraries.

Through VPWA, I have gained experience working with an NGO not only by producing materials for the library but also through conversations with the director, Mr. Hayford Siaw, regarding the history of VPWA. I realized how much we rely on our sponsors' support and how it is important to frequently update the sponsors. It seems that a large portion of NGO work is collaboration with supporters, so it seems important to maintain strong relationships with the sponsors. In order to continue this exploration of NGO-sponsor collaboration, I will continue to work for VPWA by constructing a document in order to inform our sponsors about how they can help our Pokuase and Darmang libraries function at 100%. Examples of proposed improvements include more chairs, tables, and laptops, as well as screen monitors to display educational cartoons and shows featuring characters presented in the books that the children are reading.

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# KARIN OH – GHANA

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At VPWA, I felt useful, productive, and collaborative. The director, staff, and other volunteers were extremely friendly, welcoming, and helpful. Most importantly, I genuinely believe that I was able to make a true, sustainable impact. I am looking forward to telling my classmates and friends all about VPWA and encouraging them to apply. I think VPWA is a great fit for anybody who wants to make a sustainable difference in a developing country. It makes me extremely satisfied to know that the work that I performed for VPWA will impact lives for the next 10, 20 years. Thank you so much, Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, for making this experience possible.



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# KELLY PERRY – SOUTH AFRICA

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“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.”

~ Archbishop Desmond Tutu

## Identity & Dignity –

Two entities that must fuse together in order to ignite true happiness and peace. The week in Johannesburg acted as a backdrop; an introduction to the chronicles of South Africa's past and present. I became angry as I walked through the halls of the Apartheid museum and beheld snippets of the dehumanization of Black, Colored, and Indian individuals. I traveled to a primary school, where I was saddened by the realization that covert and overt vestiges of institutional racism still seep heavily through South African society; in this case, endangering the education of Black and Colored students. Then, at the Soweto Hospice, I witnessed strong emphasis on death with dignity; genuine care and love are the systole and diastole of this haven, providing me with a glimpse into South Africa's road to healing. Moments at the Soweto Hospice clung to me long after my visit. It led me to question where the nation's dignity lies – is it truly with its people? Dignity is an act of embrace, an attempt to say I see you; it arrives when a person or system respects one's identity and provides one with resources necessary to survive and thrive. Post-apartheid, the South African Bill of Rights established that “everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected”. While this statement has yet to come to full fruition, the Soweto Hospice is a living and breathing place of hope and peace that it will with time.

## Storytelling & empathy –

At Missionvale Care Center, Port Elizabeth, the need to survive takes center stage. Aunties and nurses conduct home visits to sick patients, package presents yearlong to ensure that the children of the Missionvale township receive at least one gift, distribute bread and soup to those impoverished, and, most importantly, acknowledge one's existence as not a wretch of disease and poverty, but a child of humanity – deserving the utmost care and love. It stands as a lesson of reality, of the depravity and injustice that exists on this earth, driving men and women and children to break from the breadline and fight one another for one basic need – food. Missionvale Care Center is the symptom of a system that neglects individuals, feeding funds into the mouths of corporations and extravagant means of development instead. It is the product of one individual's – Sister Ethel's – recognition of the power of a single human being. Change must occur at the individual level, prompting one to recognize one's own dignity and self-worth. Only then will change evolve within the family and community – and ultimately, society.

A society holds much more than what meets the eye. It is interwoven with elaborate intricacies that overlap, merge, interact, and repel. Through service learning and observation – notebook and pen 50



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# KELLY PERRY – SOUTH AFRICA

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always in hand – I found that that the best means of unraveling this constellation is through storytelling and empathy. Storytelling is the single, most humane force powerful enough to break down walls between individuals. Empathy wills us to listen, to attempt to understand. We arrive in South Africa as student volunteers – ambassadors, as the Missionvale Care Center women call us. We witness on a daily basis the innate inequalities that pervade South African society; we see suffering – hunger, thirst, poverty – coupled with either hope or hopelessness; we talk, we feel, we reflect; we witness love and selflessness over and over again; we gain mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters. However, we are the periphery, not the nucleus; it is our duty to broadcast the narratives of those within the nucleus – workers of the Soweto Hospice, Sister Ethel and the tireless men and women of Missionvale Care Center – to further inspire other individuals and ignite greater change. We have a responsibility to recognize the assets of a community – not only its faults and cracks, to view the large “isms” (classism, racism, etc.) and the details that paint the constellation we see. In other words, we must embrace the individual and the society in its entirety.

During my four-week stay, I conducted a series of interviews with several of the Missionvale Care Center staff, attempting to capture the individuals’ strength, love, and forgiveness through narrative and storytelling. At the end of her first interview, Auntie Rachel breathed a long sigh of relief, whispering to me how good it felt to share her story and be listened to. Her comment underlined the significance of storytelling, not only as a powerful medium of change and empowerment, but as a fabric that weaves interconnectedness between individuals as well. Conducting interviews allowed me to adopt a more holistic and personal approach to addressing the stereotypes that plague South Africa, leading me to believe that an antidote to combating racism, poverty, and other ills lies in the act of listening, which fuels empathy, and storytelling.

Sister Ethel has ensured that love and care are being delivered to those within and beyond the Care Center’s embrace; however, this place serves as a temporary Band-Aid; people cannot form a breadline and be visited by nurses forever. Further down the path, the need to educate will take the spotlight. Further down the path, the township will be able to address its own needs and provide for its citizens accordingly without relying on external resources. Further down the path, peace will prevail.



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# KELLY PERRY – SOUTH AFRICA

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## Ubuntu & Peace –

The week in Cape Town served as a time for reflection, a moment of meditation on the value of life, love, and learning. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity that the Nichols family bestowed upon me – thank you. I was not aware I was in desperate need of cleansing until I met the women of Missionvale Care Center. I was not aware that wholly giving and receiving love could provide such powerful reconciliation, breaking down of walls, and healing – illuminating the power of Ubuntu before my eyes. Amidst the suffering brought upon by the poverty cycle, it may seem as if Ubuntu has transformed from a living abstraction to simply an abstraction. However, if we allow ourselves to absorb more than what is surface level, we notice the Aunties' tender love, the children's laughter interspersed between the claps of hand games, the melodies of praise floating from Missionvale Primary's choir practices, the voices of concentration as students recite the alphabet...these are the threads that will stitch society into a place of peace once more.



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## MONA QUARLESS – SOUTH AFRICA

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Webster's dictionary's first definition of transformation suggest it is an ongoing process while the root word suggests a positive transfiguration. My time in South Africa was just that: A complete change that continues to morph, evolve and shape my life. Just yesterday I received an e-mail from Uncle Andrew asking how my day was. Last week I received a morning message of encourage from Donny, Thobeka and Poppy. In Missionvale we worked side-by-side, but were never co-workers, always family. The outpouring of love from day one has left me forever changed. Open hearts, minds, hands and souls. They reminded me of love, happiness and the beautiful essence and necessity for humanity in its purest form. There was nothing lavish about the Missionvale Care Center, but when you entered the gate in the morning you immediately felt a sense of belonging. Every morning I was greeted by a handshake from Mr. Wellington, a hug with by the women in nutrition center and hugs from the children at school. There was a sense of true community. A true sense of care, compassion and selflessness.

Simultaneously, my experience illustrated oppression and how its multi-dimensional existence infiltrates every aspect of the Missionvale community and the greater South Africa. From educational opportunities, to supply chains, to donations. Every day those working at the center had to battle with a greater system of injustice. I have taken for granted attending and working at fully stocked schools, picking up a working phone, hearing a dial tone, having a working computer, ordering supplies and having basic resources present. Yet, at Missionvale it seemed the staff had to work twice as hard to achieve half as much. Powdered soup, bread, and powdered formula were never enough. Election season introduced additional complications as political parties began to dictate and control supply chains. It was a jarring realizations on just what happens when people practice politics instead of policy reform.

My long term goal is to open a full service community health clinic. Working in the nutrition unit and making home visits taught me the importance of time and respect. Having worked in various hospital settings many times we are held to the 15-minute rule. Patients need to be seen, diagnosed and discharged in 15 minutes. This mandate by many healthcare institutions has left many people feeling ignored and dismissed. One of the most healing parts of medical visit is acknowledgement and empathy. Hearing a patient. Listening to their symptoms. Taking a comprehensive approach and reaffirming that you are accessible and here to help. Be present is half the process. The rapport you build is what lasts. How they leave your office or how you leave their home matters. The community workers and nutrition specialists made it their duty to talk with the community and ensure their needs were being met. When we visited homes we carried ourselves as friends who were visiting to assist. Whether a sick client needed assistance cleaning, whether a patient needed to talk, whether we were there to give positive encourage or deliver medication or food. Everything from respite care to a therapeutic touch were never asking too much of the home health aides. Their job was understood as their vocation and a responsibility they took great pride in.



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## MONA QUARLESS – SOUTH AFRICA

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For me, returning and beginning my doctoral program a few days after, instilled determination and drive for the 4-year journey ahead.

Having moved to Richmond and started graduate school in the racial and social climate our nation presently stands in has been nothing short of challenging. Psychologically, emotionally, physically and academically. The experience of South Africa eerily mirrors the tensions and fears felt here in the States. Daily I wonder if my talents would not be better used as a community activist, rather than a graduate student. But I have learned the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. The anger felt by many South African citizens who feel ignored and disenfranchised by the government echoes loudly throughout the neighborhoods of America. Simply put. We cannot wait any longer for change. We cannot hope a politician will fulfill his or her promises made during a political season when polarizing comments built sensationalism rather than trust and change. Communities must be empowered with the knowledge and resources to spark change and force legislature to change. The rhetoric we often hear that blames the lowliest, serves as a distraction from the task at hand. Our responsibility as global citizens is to serve. Whatever our talents are we must put them forth to better the lives of others. Talk is not enough. Discussions are not enough. We need action. We need change. We can't afford to wait.



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# MEGAN RAMIREZ – ECUADOR

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It's difficult to find the right words to describe my time in Ecuador. In some way, it's impossible to describe how much the time with the students and teachers at Camp Hope means to me.

To give some background information, I'll say that I'm a senior studying Disability Studies and Child Development. I am a 21 year old Puerto Rican woman from a low socioeconomic status background with a passion for service. Knowing this, you can imagine my joy when I saw the words "service-learning," "people with disabilities," "Spanish," and "financial aid."

In Quito, we served with Yanapuma, an amazing nonprofit. Camp Hope, which is connected to Yanapuma, provides a wide variety of services to the students with disabilities with which they work. They work with kids, teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and provide typical classroom instruction, vocational training, physical therapy, speech therapy and more. I spent my time in two classrooms. One is specifically for younger students with cerebral palsy and the other is for children with autism. I did a variety of activities depending on which classroom I was in, the day's schedule, and the students who were there that day. I changed many diapers and clothes that had gotten messy at lunch. I read stories and and played many, many games. The games and activities, while fun, also always have some kind of educational purpose. For example, the class often went outside and worked on sensory integration by touching the grass on the playground and smelling the leaves of the lemon trees.

I am happy to say that I was able to make some communication boards for students in one classroom. I have experience using Picture Communication Symbols, or PCS, to augment communication through my practicums at Vanderbilt. I was able to make many PCS (see photo below). Some of the photos I used are from the website and the words are those that I already knew. With other PCS, I altered the picture or took my own photos to make the PCS as relevant and effective for the students as possible. Some of the words were new to me, such as tomate instead of anaranjado for the color orange. After making the PCS, I went to a nearby papelería (convenience store/printer place) to print and laminate the PCS. I cannot express how much I enjoyed talking with the classroom's teacher about ways to improve the PCS I made and coming up with a list of new words to make for the next day. I'm so glad I could make something tangible for the classroom.



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# MEGAN RAMIREZ – ECUADOR

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I will apply to participate in the Ecuador Project this coming summer. I would absolutely love the chance to return to Camp Hope. Now that I am familiar with how the organization works, the teachers and students, and their needs, I have ideas of some resources I could bring that would be useful for Camp Hope. Also, I have some ambitious ideas of how the special education department could get involved with Camp Hope. I'll keep you updated!

I'm going to apply to a travelling fellowship that would allow me to look at special education and disability services in other countries. I plan to apply to a master's in International Development, and work to affect change on special education and disability services abroad at the nonprofit or policy level.

Thank you again for your financial assistance. Without the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, this amazing serving-learning experience would not have been financially possible for me. ¡Mil gracias!





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# MATT REYNOLDS – PERU

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As a recipient of a stipend from the Nichols family, I decided to participate in a medical program that brings volunteers in to work in clinics in rural parts of Peru. I signed up through International Volunteer Headquarters and worked directly with Máximo Nivel in Peru. Throughout the three-week program, I was graciously housed by locals in the city of Cusco as I spent my mornings working in a small town outside of the city.

As far as day-to-day activities went, a large part of my time was spent working with the head physician at the clinic, a woman originally from Cuba. I often accompanied her on visits to elderly patients in the town that were unable to make the trip to the clinic. I also was given the opportunity to perform triage on the locals, taking their height, weight, and blood pressure. I even had the chance to administer injections and fill prescriptions, things I would never be able to do in the U.S. without further training. In addition, I helped other volunteers in the clinic who spoke little Spanish communicate with the patients and local doctors so that they too could contribute to the larger operation and gain an understanding of the situations of the patients.

While I took away lessons, memories, and new skills from working at the Peruvian clinic, one of my favorite parts of the trip was my homestay. My host, Nancy, was very accommodating and helped us learn about the city and local culture. She helped us practice and improve our Spanish while in the house and cooked us a number of traditional, local dishes and comfort foods. Nancy and her family treated me like one of their own, and I really appreciated the advice they were able to offer me when I needed it. At any given time though, Nancy was hosting anywhere from six to twelve volunteers. As a result, I loved being able to spend time with and get to know other volunteers from all over the world such as Australia, France, England, and the Philippines. Being in Cusco also gave us plenty to explore in our days off. Some of my activities included visiting Machu Picchu (a must see!), ATVing and ziplining through the Sacred Valley, and exploring the old salt mines of Maras.

With regards to the outcome achieved by this project, it is not quite feasible to define one volunteer's contribution to the community. However, what is more comprehensible is the amount of time saved and the number of patients assisted every year thanks to the volunteers that the organization continuously brings in to lend a helping hand in the understaffed clinics. My personal outcomes, though, included advancing my cultural competency while also having a very enjoyable abroad experience. I was able to learn more about the tangible skills required to work in a medical clinic while also witnessing the pitfalls of a particular medical system. I have been using my Spanish to volunteer with underserved Hispanic populations for several years now and my trip to Peru has allowed me to continue this pursuit and solidify my skills. Through my experiences like these, I have learned how much I enjoy working with such populations and I have taken this into consideration while applying to medical school. I hope that through my future training, I will be enabled to dedicate my life to providing care to underserved groups.

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# MATT REYNOLDS – PERU

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I would just like to thank the Nichols family again for providing me with the means to take this trip. Everyone deserves experiences like these to take them out of their comfort zone, help them learn about another culture, and discover their passion for service. While these experiences certainly can be a highlight of our young lives, the Nichols family is also doing a great service to the greater community, as I believe providing these opportunities helps to foster a more understanding, sensitive, and altruistic generation. I hope that one day I may also be in a position to pay it forward and give back in such a manner as the Nichols Family has done for me. Thank you.



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## RADHA SATHANAYAGAM – SOUTH AFRICA

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Spending time serving and exploring in South Africa showed me firsthand how the past is always part of the present but also how we must use lessons of the past to make improvements. The first week I spent in Johannesburg gave me a deeper awareness of both the devastating history of injustice and the present day ramifications that still play a role in the effort to move the nation forward. This was especially evident in visiting the Constitutional Court of South Africa, which was established as part of the democratic constitution in 1994. The court lies at the site of a former prison, where during apartheid, prisoners were segregated based on race and given far poorer amenities if they were black. While some of the old stairs, brick walls, and prison cells remain today as a reminder of the past, the current courtroom is open to the public and has clear glass windows to depict the transparency of the institution for all people. Yet also in Johannesburg, it became clear that racial and economic inequality is still a very real struggle. We were able to visit the township of Soweto, which has areas of pristine mansions but also large portions of land with shacks for homes. We also went to the Soweto Hospice, whose workers taught us about the large healthcare needs of the area, particularly in dealing with HIV and AIDS. It was especially meaningful to go on home visits with the hospice and be able to interact with staff, patients, and families. On the visits on this particular day, the hospice worker I was with was delivering food supplies to patients' homes. Though simply bringing food, she was so kind, patient, and genuinely helpful as she met with the patients and families; it was a reminder to me of some of the important qualities that are part of being a healer.

The following four weeks of the experience was the main component of the trip, as I spent those weeks serving at Machiu Primary School in Port Elizabeth. For me, the prior week in Johannesburg was an important introduction to be able to really see and understand some of the issues and root causes that South Africans face. Machiu Primary School is a school for kindergarten (grade R as they call it) through grade 7 students located in a primarily colored area. Speaking to principals, teachers, and our service site leader, Andrew, it was clear that a main issue for this and other government-funded schools is inequality in education and resources. There was overcrowding in classrooms, lack of enough staff, and failed promises by the education department for new mobile classrooms and additional teachers. With such heavy problems facing Machiu Primary, it was difficult at first to see how I could make a positive impact through my service in the upcoming four weeks. However, through discussion with the various staff members and the other Vanderbilt students, we came up with projects that could use our abilities to benefit the school. I was part of improving the small and fairly empty staff room by adding and fixing some amenities to make teachers and workers more comfortable during their breaks and meetings. We also painted a mural which had students' handprints as well a quote about the importance of teaching in an effort to build unity and strength for staff members. Additionally, I co-led a peer mediation program for about 30 sixth grade students. Over the course of several sessions, students learned how to deal with their own conflicts and also how to promote peace in their school and home environments.



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## RADHA SATHANAYAGAM – SOUTH AFRICA

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An important part of the process was empowering the students with the knowledge and confidence to actively be peacemakers in their environments. These students will become peer mediators in their following school year, leaders meant to help resolve and react positively to difficult situations that may arise among all other students at Machiu.

Aside from these projects and other tasks ranging from handing out spoons to substitute teaching an entire day of class, one of the most important aspects of being at Machiu Primary was interacting with students and staff. Being in a different culture and country, I learned a lot by simply hearing about the lives and the things that are important to the members of the school. It was inspiring to hear about the effort one teacher, Ms. Jaffta, puts not only into teaching, but finding an outside social worker for students, since the school does not have one. I was able to thoroughly enjoy talking to, playing sports with, or painting with the students during breaks and after school. During these weeks, a major lesson I learned is how significant every interaction can be, whether a simple hug or a long conversation.

Through Vanderbilt's Office of Active Citizenship and Service and thanks to the generosity of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I was able to learn a great deal from the people and places around me in South Africa. My experience has encouraged me to work hard to engage with the local and global community around me to make a positive impact in some way, even if it is for a single individual.



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## LAYLA SHAHMOHAMMADI – SOUTH AFRICA

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“Africans have a fresh sense of creativity that other people don't have. We are drawing people to Africa with our art. I mean it's got to be something. You're all here, right?”

– Atang Tshikare (36 years old), South African visual artist

Atang says this and I ask myself what drew me here. It was over six months ago when a friend from school told me about the OACS service-learning program in South Africa. She urged me to apply to one of the four programs and I knew immediately which country I wanted to go to. Looking back, I would have said it was the experience of traveling to a new place in an unexplored part of the world, the opportunity to practice holistic approached service in Missionvale, and the chance to gain perspective that drew me to South Africa. But while I was there, I found gratitude for the takeaways I never could have predicted. I found that living with ten other students is the best way to build character (respect and patience specifically) and being involved in a place like Missionvale – where things are anything but routine and unexpected delays in delivery are not so unexpected – is the greatest way to practice stillness. These past six weeks fostered countless emotional – and unforgettable – experiences that grew my awareness of others needs and wants in a way like never before. On this trip, I began a journey of what intentional mindfulness looks and feels like.

Before going to South Africa, my thoughts on the country as a whole were limited. I never studied the country's history or culture before getting involved with this project and knew very little about South African politics outside of apartheid and Nelson Mandela. Names of leaders like Desmond Tutu and Steve Biko were completely foreign to me. I had no idea about the transfiguration of townships across the country and how racism dictated geographic placement and impoverished millions. But as I worked at Missionvale and learned about the historical linings of this country through lectures, museum visits, tours, personal encounters, etc., I heard story after story that helped shape my understand of this country's reformed sociopolitical identity – a dedication towards implementing concentrated compassion in community. The service learning immersion facilitated a type of learning that allowed me to put passion and emotion into my understanding of this country's history. It's helped me see past generalizations and given me an insight on individual experience that cannot be replaced.

I learned that poverty destroys community value and principle; it corrupts human nature. In places like Missionvale, people face immeasurable hardship. But amidst the adversity, Missionvale fosters members like the caregivers I am thankful to have the chance to work alongside/listen to daily and the community members who constantly challenge my understandings of spirituality and principle and teach me to love. Sister Ethel, the founder and director of the care center I worked at during my time in Port Elizabeth, has fostered a standard within the community Missionvale of workers with hearts that looks past the corruption of poverty and see the wholeness of everyone. I'm learning to try to do the same.

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## LAYLA SHAHMOHAMMADI – SOUTH AFRICA

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Do we focus on the isms or the immediate needs in a South African society that has been tagged by poverty and vandalized by racism and hate? These were questions we faced as we discussed the sustainability of our program and how we would continue working to facilitate change after leaving. We should approach resolution the trial between isms or immediate need in a way that addresses both. There are people who feel more equipped to address the ideological means while others want to help provide immediate relief to an issue. We cannot focus solely on one and forget the other. I've learned so much from being in South Africa but I've solidified my belief that solution requires a combination of efforts; raising the awareness of lasting implications of racism, sexism, and other isms while addressing immediate need with help.

South Africa vandalized all of my misunderstandings of its history with colors of love and progression, with unsettlement and protest. It tagged me by inspiring me with a desire I've recognized before; affection for representing those who go unrepresented and together discovering healing in a broken world.





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# PAUL SNIDER – SOUTH AFRICA

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This summer I spent 12 weeks on assignment with MK2MK, a branch of Cru (a non-profit, Christian missions organization) within their department of Staff Care. MK2MK focuses on caring for missionary families by working with their children – Missionary Kids. One way they do this is by training and equipping college-age Missionary Kids in how to work with high school Missionary Kids and give them the opportunities to go on service trips together. I was trained through their internship program two years ago in Thailand, and now I have begun working with them full time as an intern leader, training the next generation of college-age volunteers.

This summer's 12 weeks first began with three weeks at Cru's headquarters in Orlando. Our 12 interns went through personal evaluations such as the Strengths Finder assessment and the Enneagram personality test. They engaged in seminars on classroom management, storytelling, leading a small group and bible study, personal mentorship, relationship skills, crisis management, child safety, improvisation, and community development. All along the way our team of four intern leaders helped facilitate each seminar, lead discussion afterwards, and help them apply what they learned as they planned for leading on our eight-week mission trip. Additionally, I met with all six of our guy interns one-on-one to start my mentorship relationships with them, which would continue during our trip. The proved to be very meaningful on both ends since I was able to share my past experiences with them as a source of instruction and we could encourage each other as we spoke about life outside of the internship.

The second part of the summer was our trip to South Africa. The trip consisted of two four-week projects in Port Shepstone, SA. It was set up as two distinct projects to accommodate more high school participants, and to give our leadership team a break in between groups. We had 32 and 23 high school MKs for the first and second projects, respectively. During the first month we helped lead "holiday clubs" put on by the church we partnered with, taught a leadership/healthy habits curriculum at an elementary school, and worked with a local youth group at their weekly meetings and on an in-country mission trip to a nearby rural community. During the second month we taught at two different high schools. We went through a healthy choices curriculum that focused on HIV/AIDS prevention within the context of achieving your dreams. At the end of the month we put on a leadership/team-building camp for the youth group. Throughout both months we served at the AIDS hospice, working with patients and doing some painting on the grounds.



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# PAUL SNIDER – SOUTH AFRICA

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The last part of the summer was a week of debrief time in Orlando with just the internship team. This served to conclude the summer with some rest and reflection for our weary interns, along with lots of feedback and evaluations, making plans for future involvement, and brainstorming ways to improve and add to the ministry of MK2MK. I planned out this time and was really proud of the results. One of the goals of the summer is equipping our interns to become part of our team of regular volunteers who will travel with us in the future and I really believe the majority of them are invested in what we do and will be interested in working with us again.

## **Lessons Learned**

This time around I had the opportunity to help a lot more with project leadership and the direction of our trip. With such a large team each month (~50 people and ~40 people) a lot goes into planning and executing our service opportunities. Sometimes that means just needing leaders who can troubleshoot, be flexible, and make decisions thoughtfully and quickly. This means I was never really sitting back and just participating in what we did, except during free time or some moments connecting with South Africans at church or in the youth groups. On top of this I had to learn how to remind myself of the vision of what we were doing and why it is important and not get bogged down in the details. One of the biggest lessons I learned was through a seminar that was new to our internship curriculum. This was the community development module. The bottom line of the three-day course was understanding the difference between relief and development, and choosing how to work in a foreign country in a productive way that engages the local community. Our team always seeks to work with local partners who will continue the work we assist in throughout the year. But this added an understanding of the work we do as either relief or development. Relief is temporary and doesn't solve problems for long. It should be carried out in response to event-based crises. Development is focused on long-term solutions and assisting a community as they solve problems for themselves. The biggest way I saw my team use this model of development was going on the in-country mission trip with members of a local youth group. This gave them a chance to serve their own surrounding area and see what it looks like to reach out to others.

Related to this idea of development, the principle of partnership was so apparent this summer as significant for success. One of the reasons we keep going back to South Africa and Port Shepstone specifically is the partners that we get to work with there. Our local coordinator at the church really understands how to help teams fit in well to the local ministry. Through partnering with the youth group, we also had an opportunity to show community members a multi-ethnic team, committed to common goals and willing to work together. This was really meaningful in a country with stark racial fault lines and ongoing conflict.



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## PAUL SNIDER – SOUTH AFRICA

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For continuing what I have learned and the work I got to be part of, I will be serving with MK2MK full-time this year after fundraising. This will be a one-year commitment, with an option to do a second year before applying for a long-term position. Next summer we will probably work with a different partnership in Albania, but we are making plans to return to Port Shepstone in two years. Over the year I will get to lead at conferences, on care trips, and with youth groups in Orlando. The summer has definitely equipped me for serving during the year and it gave me a chance to build more connections with my teammates. Having some common experiences in South Africa has built some significant rapport that will help us in the coming months in the office.





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## CARLY STEWART – SOUTH AFRICA

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My time in South Africa was marked by an existential growth experience compounded with both classroom and hands-on experience in the Public Health sector of South Africa. Each day, we learned about one facet of public health in the classroom such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases, and mental health. In the afternoon, we travelled to various public hospitals, clinics, and even the health clinic on the campus of Stellenbosch University. We interacted with the health care professionals, learned about some of the patients and their stories, and learned deeply and first-hand the condition of the public health system in one of the world's most quickly developing countries.

Before I went to South Africa, I researched the country's health system and specifically the lasting health effects of the Apartheid system. Discrimination based on race created a stark divide in the quality of care distributed to the population. While the legislation was abolished in 1994, the health care system remains the same with those who were considered "inferior" receiving little to no treatment and no health coverage. One of my most vivid memories from my trip was our site visit to Tygerberg Hospital, the second largest public hospital in South Africa and the largest in the Western Cape. On our 15-minute drive to the hospital, we drove past one of the many, many townships that still remain the home of the millions marginalized by the racial legislation of Apartheid. As we drove past, I witnessed a group of teenage boys beating up a smaller, younger child. I saw men, women, and children of all ages living in unsanitary shacks and many people who were improperly clothed; many children walked without shoes on the long dirt road coming out of the township. Even in a few second drive past the township, I witnessed the condition in which millions of South Africans live.

When we reached the hospital, we received a tour of the facilities from the Head Nurse. He explained to us that the hospital and government are trying to raise money to construct a new facility as it is 50 years old and run down; mold was growing from the ceiling, some wings of the hospital were completely shut down. Keep in mind, that this is the second largest and most utilized hospital in the entire country. He said that fundraising and building would be a decade-long process. At the end of the visit, we had the opportunity to ask any questions that we had. I raised my hand and asked what the largest barriers facing the health care system in South Africa was. Without hesitation he responded money. The millions of people in South Africa need health care, but there is not enough money to distribute to the equal care of all people. Many of those who live in poverty must go to local clinics where lines stretch a mile and the wait is all day. A simple visit to the clinic becomes an all-day adventure, an adventure that results in a day of lost wages.

In this moment, in this story, I vividly remember a switch flipping in my mind about the course I desire my life to take. All people deserve an equal access to health care. South Africa is an extreme example of inequality and inequity in health care due to such extreme discrimination against the majority of their people and not enough money to rectify the situation and bring change even 20 years later.

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## CARLY STEWART – SOUTH AFRICA

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My global first-hand experience of learning portrayed the vast inequality in health care systems around the world. It also emphasized to me that the United States, a haven for individuals of many countries, cultures, and immigrants also experience such drastic inequalities, as well. Going into my experience I had little idea of what I wanted to do and be for the rest of my life. Through this trip I have learned that my goal in life is to help those who do not have the equal access to the health care that they deserve. Moreover, I want to strive to work in communities that are at an increased risk of developing negative health outcomes. It is no secret that even in our country, groups of people are discriminated based on race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender identity, and sexual identity. These groups and even the geographic location of a neighborhood position certain groups to be more susceptible to illness and suffering.

I am in the process of applying to Public Health programs in Community Health Sciences at top institutes around the country. I hope to create and implement programs in communities around the country that are at this increased risk of negative health outcomes. It is my hope that these programs prevent certain health ailments and chronic conditions from occurring. I also have a passion for mental health and truly believe that mental health translates to good physical health. My ultimate life goal is to develop a mental health curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school children to learn about mental health and illness, healthy ways to manage stress, and how to help a family member or friend who may need it. If taught younger and more thoroughly, hopefully the next generation of our country's children will suffer from less mental health ailments and subsequently less physical health ailments. It was through my experience in South Africa and seeing their public health system that I realized my biggest passion in life, and the inequalities I will strive to change out my career and life. While many problems exist in the public health care sector in the United States, these problems are even more emphasized abroad. Once I am trained and have work experience in the United States, I hope to take my experience and leadership abroad and specifically to South Africa. Until then, I plan to work diligently each day to study for admission to public health programs. I will also be making monthly donations to the Tygerberg Hospital fund to rebuild their facility.

Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for this incredible experience to bring humanitarian work to South Africa. The experience influenced my outlook on life and now I aim to help people all around the world achieve the best health and happiness possible. I would not have been able to have this experience without your generous support. Thank you!



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# JOANNA SUN – MOROCCO

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I am writing to you from the plane as I embark on my next journey to Copenhagen for my study abroad program. Sitting on this plane, I am envisioning and worrying about all the experiences of my upcoming semester. Not so long ago, I was in the same position as I took the leap of faith to travel to Morocco, stay with a homestay, and immerse myself with a group of students I had never really met before. I was not sure what to expect but I knew that this was going to be a once in a lifetime experience and would go by in a blink of the eye. And those two things were exactly what happened. I may not remember exactly what I ate at my first dinner with my host family, but I do remember all the first impressions I had of each. I can not recall what my tasks were for the first day at my NGO site, REMESS, but I can tell you that my boss will be a lifelong friend with a lasting impact. Honestly, after 6 weeks living in the Medina (a collection of homes and shops) I still had trouble finding my way home, but I will never forget the smell of the fish market or the corner shop where I bought my water. Perhaps the long bus rides to our weekend excursions would rather be forgotten, but all the relationships I fostered with my fellow cohorts will carry on into Vanderbilt and beyond. It is hard to summarize my experience in Morocco and do it justice because there really are no words to describe what I feel when reminisce. It's a mix of remorse, excitement, regret, and extreme nostalgia.

The biggest lesson I learned on this trip is that often times, we all focus so much on trying to push behind the negative aspects of our life to emphasize on what we perceive as the positive. We want everyone to know that we are doing fine otherwise it becomes an internal issue and may reflect weakness. But the thing is, everyone is going through their own personal battle and to automatically jump to a conclusion about a situation only does a disservice to yourself. Personally, I always try to put on a happy face even though on the inside I'm anything but happy. My boss would see right through me and would ask questions and I think at some point in the 6 weeks, it clicked for me that it was ok to admit I was struggling. Now when someone asks me how Morocco was, I don't just state all my amazing experiences, but also talk about how the cultural differences really impacted me and how their religious views often conflicted with my own thoughts. Through discussions, I was able to really create numerous deeper leveled relationships as well as understanding the general values of Moroccans.

Prior to arriving in Morocco, I had a long list of stereotypes about Moroccans either through research or just through mindset. I really thought that everybody would be extremely religious and close-minded about many topics. I also believed that Morocco was going to be a place that lacked many amenities and infrastructures. Coming back to America, I have learned that many people have the same mindset. Telling them about my summer, I often get responses such as: "wow that's so brave of you", "omg I'm sure you must really appreciate home now" or "you're parents must have been worried sick".



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# JOANNA SUN – MOROCCO

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These responses reflect Morocco as being in poverty, a place of danger, and a place that would be beneath America. But I want to change that image and even taking the time to explain my experience to one person so that perhaps they would reconstruct their image is worthwhile. Beyond that, I really want to emphasize the importance of open-mindedness and empathy and I think the most effective way to do so is acting on it myself.

So thank you Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for giving me the opportunity to take this once in a lifetime journey that has become engraved in my own mindset and being.



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## HARINI SURESH – SOUTH AFRICA

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From reading the news and enrolling in history/geography classes over the years, I was aware of the pervasiveness of unemployment, hunger, and governmental corruption in impoverished areas of the world. However, I only truly began to understand the vicious cycle of poverty when I became immersed in the lives of those at the Missionvale Care Centre in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Participating in Vanderbilt's OACS Global Immersion Program in South Africa made me realize what it means to be an active global citizen. Observing first-hand the acute injustices that plague South Africa not only opened my eyes to a host of global disparities, but also led me to ponder what I can contribute to the long journey towards equality and resolution.

Governmental corruption was a huge theme in our learning experience in South Africa. Two conversations in particular had a profound impact on my understanding of the hopelessness, frustration, and anger the government inflicts on the South African people. One was with Andrew, our South African tour guide, driver, and father. He opened a mechanic shop with the intention of empowering youth in the community, but lacked funds to expand. He explained that the governmental agencies in charge of grants would inevitably find some way to misallocate the funds to expect more out of him or give him less. I could hear the frustration and helplessness in his voice. He indicated that people have utterly given up placing their trust in the government. Likewise, talking with Sister Ethel, the founder of Missionvale Care Centre, the question was posed – “If you were president of South Africa, what is the first thing you would do?” She replied that she would have everyone in a seat of power spend a day living in the slums of Missionvale. Her indication of the government's ignorance and lack of empathy again proved to me how much more growth the transitional democracy of South Africa needs.

Throughout our service experience in South Africa, we were urged to constantly reflect on what we, as students from America, were leaving behind. However, I have come to realize that Missionvale changed me more than I changed it. During my four weeks volunteering, I shadowed Dr. J. Strömbeck, volunteer physician and founder of the Missionvale clinic, accompanied caregivers to homes of disabled patients, assisted nurses in the clinic, learned about HIV/AIDS treatments, and attended support groups for HIV+ patients in the community. Volunteering at Missionvale had a profound impact on my medical aspirations. Hearing the communities' stories and forming connections with the health staff and patients opened my eyes to the social determinants of health and the desperate need for NGOs like Missionvale to fill the gap of social work, nutrition, and healthcare in the community.

Missionvale sparked a fire in me to continue engaging with underserved communities to alleviate the effects of health disparities in the world. As a future physician and advocate for social equity, I wish to serve in health centers and clinics to decrease risks, promote health, and close the gap of health inequity.

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## HARINI SURESH – SOUTH AFRICA

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Though I have traveled internationally before, my time in South Africa was my first experience actively and intentionally engaging with communities to learn intimately about the country through immersion in service. I hope to continue internalizing my experiences and growing from the stories and inspiration I gained. South Africa will always hold a special place in my heart.





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## COURTLAND SUTTON – DENMARK

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First, to Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, I would like to thank the both of you for the generous contributions that make the Nichols Humanitarian Fund possible. Without your help, the learning, service projects, and various research ventures conducted by myself and my fellow Vanderbilt students would not be possible. It is my hope that what I've learned this summer can help inspire more service and learning based trips on my own part, and for others, in the future.

As a public policy major, I am greatly interested in issues of education, homelessness, and other sectors of policy that might relate to youth and children. I used my summer as a two-fold process to learn about both.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, I spent my time learning about the welfare state, particularly healthcare, homelessness, and the higher education system, and what the Danes' consideration of these topics might mean for the same issues in the United States. In Denmark, many of these social issues are regarded differently. To begin, because the country is a welfare state, they are not really categorized as "issues" or "problems," but rather facets of society. For example, the use of any kind of public assistance is not demonized, racialized, or otherwise negatively categorized. Everyone uses them, as everyone pays a high proportion of their income through taxes to receive such good benefits. Likewise, free healthcare is not seen as a leech on some to provide for others, but a benefit of their society. What I did learn is that recent events have largely influenced whether Denmark will exist as a welfare state for much longer. Admiration for a more capitalistic system and questions over how to provide benefits to a growing population, including immigrants and refugees, have created doubt over whether they can keep doing things the way they always have. Their long-touted "happiest country in the world" ranking may soon go to another. My summer also led in to my study abroad experience for the Fall 2016 semester. I hope to continue studying the welfare state working with the Danish National Centre for Social research, and maybe volunteering with some refugee organizations.

I spent the other half in Nashville, Tennessee at the Safe Haven Family Shelter. I learned a couple of things here; first that family shelters play an important role in assisting families in need, but also that the actual way a shelter functions can heavily determine a family's success once they leave that shelter. Most shelters focus on helping one group; men, female domestic violence victims, or families. But a good portion of family shelters will only allow mothers and children up to a certain age. Any male relative above about age 13 has to go to another shelter. This means that young, impressionable, and at risk youth are often placed in environments that can add additional pressure to an already stressful situation. Safe Haven worked differently in that it limited the number of families it could take, ten, in order to allow the entire family to stay together. They also worked on settling the causes of homelessness, like job security and stable housing, to help disrupt its cyclical nature. Most of my duties related to working with children. Most days I would help run outside play activities, or participate in exercise classes with the kids. I would also help instruct arts and crafts or other activities designed to alleviate stress children experience as a result of their situation.

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## COURTLAND SUTTON – DENMARK

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Thank you again for the opportunity to work and study in a wide range of places and topics and I hope you enjoyed hearing a little about my experiences.



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# ANA VASSAN – ECUADOR

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This summer, enabled by the generous funding of the Nichols Humanitarian fund, I participated in a service trip to Quito, Ecuador where I volunteered as an English teacher at a local elementary school. The Institution of Investigation, Education, and Promotion, or INEPE, as it is more familiarly known, is a non-profit private school in the south of Quito, that caters to Ecuadorean children from infancy through secondary education. INEPE strives to create a holistic education for its pupils, by encouraging them to engage in activities beyond the rote academic curriculum of reading, writing, science, and arithmetic; and providing instruction in the more creative and applied studies, such as instrumental and vocal music, dance, yoga, and gardening. The school itself is a series of open-air buildings that are situated about halfway up one of the peaks in mountainous Quito. As is the case with most of the villages higher up the mountains and away from the metropolitan city, the area surrounding INEPE is populated by lower-income Quiteneans with tiny houses, small plots of farmland, and dogs, alpacas, and chickens as livestock. Many of the students themselves are from these more rural parts of Quito, while others travel from more northern and southern parts; most are from very low-income families.

My primary role at INEPE was to expand the English teaching program to as many of the INEPE students as possible. I worked with six different classes of 3-4 year old students, teaching through an English immersive curriculum of my own creation in which the students and I sang songs, read books, and worked with flashcards. I came into the program with very little background on either the school itself or what my role was to be within the school. This lack of preparation was mainly due to the fluctuating nature of the English teaching program at INEPE. Excluding volunteers, INEPE has two full-time adult English teachers, who work almost exclusively with the high school-aged students. Their work is supplemented by volunteers provided to them by the local Yanapuma Foundation, which connects students from around the world with organizations in Quito that could use the help of volunteers. The issue remains that these student volunteers are generally unable to commit to more than a few months to their studies and volunteer work (as was the case with myself), such that INEPE struggles to maintain fluency and consistency in their English program. Thus, teachers coming in often have little idea of where they will be placed, and must gauge for themselves upon arrival the skill level of the students that they are teaching, and adjust lesson plans accordingly.





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# ANA VASSAN – ECUADOR

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It seems to me that my short stint as a volunteer teacher at INEPE might really have been more for my benefit than for the kids'. For me, my work at INEPE was an incredibly meaningful learning experience—being tossed into a situation, or a classroom as it was, and having complete freedom and control over the outcome went from a frighteningly overwhelming task, to an infinity of possibilities, to the creation of concrete change. At the end of my four weeks at INEPE I was able to teach for an entire class period in English and have the children understand the basics of what I was saying, participate in singing songs and reading stories, and demonstrate interest in learning English past the scope of the class I had already taught. And yet, I am all too aware that after my departure, my students' English instruction and interaction has become nonexistent, or close to it. INEPE does not have enough English-speaking staff for it to continue. Knowing this, I took my opportunity in Ecuador to sharpen my skills as a volunteer, a communicator, and a teacher so that, even if I am unable to have as meaningful of an impact on the students' education as I would like, I can take my lack of satisfaction at how short of a time I had to work with these children and use it to make myself a better server, a more effective tool for my future continuing to work in education reform.



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# JUSTIN YEH - ENGLAND

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I spent my month in London working with Limehouse Project to connect with underserved and immigrant populations living in East London. My primary project was to develop new website content and improve the layout of the website, making it more user-friendly and accessible. In order to do this, I went through old archived files in the database to learn more about the history of Limehouse Project. I discovered the early programs that they offered, and I was able to see how the needs of the community changed over the years. In talking with employees, I gathered information about current projects and future aspirations at Limehouse Project.

One of the most memorable events that I took part in during my time at Limehouse Project was the Supersisters event. They worked with other community partners to host a half-day program targeted to the women in the community. They invited speakers to talk about topics such as hate crime reporting, the political origins of Islamic extremism, and the basics of Islam. I hadn't been told the purpose of the event before I arrived, but I realized the value and utility of this program shortly after it began. It served as an opportunity to bring the community together and specifically sought out women in the community who did not normally have the opportunity to take a morning away from their typical responsibilities. The other function of Supersisters was to educate and inform the women of the community to help them better protect themselves. The speakers articulated solutions to problems that women might face and gave them the tools to defend their faith and resources to rely on. In this way, the organizers of Supersisters contributed to a more well-informed and cohesive community.

I was extremely impressed with the logistic organization of the Supersisters event. The organizers clearly knew the needs of their target audience, and they not only provided lunch for the attendees, but they also provided a daycare area and nursery services. Knowing that many women would be taking care of their children, the organizers made this program accessible to everyone. To me, this clearly illustrates the importance of knowing the people you serve. The employees at Limehouse Project are part of the same community and intimately know the challenges that these underserved populations face, from managing finances to facing discrimination. Seeing how well the community's needs were met made me think of all of the good-intentioned but inefficient people and projects that do not fully address the needs of various communities. For this, I am grateful for having the opportunity to witness and participate in an effort that truly put the needs of the community as the ultimate goal.

In talking with employees at Limehouse Project, I was able to discover more about my perspective as an American and the assumptions I take for granted. I realized my own relative unawareness of European and global issues, but in addition, that many issues are not uniquely American. I observed similar frustrations surrounding ineffective politics in the UK that I had accepted as commonplace in the US.



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# JUSTIN YEH - ENGLAND

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The perception that Americans are ignorant and apathetic towards global issues is grounded in our privilege of living in a country that dominates the global sphere – we more often contribute to the cause than feel the effect of global events.

This experience in London has pushed me to better inform myself and keep current with global events. While this is only the first step to global citizenship, I hope to apply these lessons to immigrant populations in the US as well. As I pursue a medical career and volunteer my time to the service of others in a health care capacity, I hope to use universal knowledge from my experience with underserved populations to provide more holistic, compassionate care.





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# CHELSEA YIP – MOROCCO

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This summer, I participated in the OACS global service program in Rabat, Morocco. Leah, my site partner, and I worked at Lalla Meriem Center, an orphanage and care center for children with disabilities. For six weeks, we worked with the three to six age group, planning and executing activities as part of the children's summer program. Between soccer games, pool days, crafts, and beach trips, every day was an adventure that was sure to involve universal smiles and laughter.

As part of the immersive experience, I stayed with a host family in the medina, a walled neighborhood within the city rich in history and culture. Our cohort first arrived in Rabat in the middle of Ramadan, and living with a host family allowed us to understand how daily life was affected during this holy month. Joanna, my roommate, and I chose to fast with our family for the remainder of Ramadan to respect their observance of the holiday. Each night, our family would wait to hear the call to prayer sounding through the medina before sitting down for ftour, the breaking of the fast. Thanks to the warmth of my host mom and siblings, I quickly learned the importance of family, nuclear and extended, in Moroccan culture.

On the weekends, my cohort would go on excursions to see different cities around the country. We travelled south to Essaouira, a coastal city once known for its port and now a popular destination for surfers, west to Merzouga to experience the vastness of the Sahara, and north to Assilah, a Spanish-influenced town filled with artists and their murals. Our partners at CCCL hosted seminars before each trip so that we would understand the significance of the history, language, and economy of each city we visited.

Through my participation in this service learning program, I learned that volunteerism is an important component of social change, but it is only one of many components. When considering the sustainability of short term volunteer programs, we have to look beyond the present issues and understand the root causes. While working at Lalla Meriem, I took the opportunity to do some research as well as interview the director of the center on where the children were coming from and what happens as they get older. I learned that because Moroccan society is not yet accepting of children born out of wedlock or single mothers, children are often abandoned as infants by mothers who have been ostracized by their families. While volunteerism addresses the present need of childcare, a societal shift in perception of single mothers is needed in order to affect change in the number of children entering Moroccan orphanages.



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# CHELSEA YIP – MOROCCO

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At Lalla Meriem, Leah and I were able to leave behind a basic outline of a summer schedule. When we originally arrived, we were surprised to find little structure and few planned activities. After gaining an understanding of how timeliness differs in Moroccan culture, we learned to adapt to Moroccan timing and base our schedule off this understanding. Additionally, on a visit to Taza, a small town in the mountainous region, I was able to meet with the directors of two smaller organizations and establish contact with them.

I hope to be able to take the lessons that Lalla Meriem has taught me to Nashville and beyond. The children at Lalla Meriem showed me the simplicities of happiness and laughter, and I hope to continue working with kids through Code Ignite, where I can combined my knowledge in computer science and love for children in local Nashville classrooms. However, I do hope to keep my eyes set beyond the immediate and keep Morocco in my sights. The directors I met with in Taza both mentioned the same issue with volunteerism; because Taza is a smaller town, there is no infrastructure to host international volunteers locally. I hope to maintain contact with these directors and consider how I can be a remote volunteer from Nashville as well as consider plans to return in the future.



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# ABEL YOSEF – MOROCCO

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I was fortunate enough to spend six weeks of my summer in Morocco with 10 of my fellow Vanderbilt students working at service sites and learning about the history and culture of Morocco by visiting cities throughout Morocco and being fully immersed in Rabat, the city where our service sites were located. During my first week in Morocco, the cohort and I spent our time familiarizing ourselves with Rabat by going on a tour of the city, greeting and spending time with our host families, meeting the staff at our work sites, and attending seminars. My work site, Association Santé Pour Tous, is a NGO that serves as health clinic that strives to provide health services to Moroccans at affordable prices and disseminate health supplies and education to those who struggle with accessibility when it comes to these resources. I was tasked with creating a Facebook page, website, and database with organizations and foundations that could assist the organization by supplying resources and funding. Working with this organization taught me about how vital a NGO's role is as an organization that sets out to rectify shortcomings within a city or country such as human rights abuses, lack of affordable health care, teaching of language or technical skills, and many more.

Reflecting back on my experience, I marvel at the memories and experiences I gained as well as the lessons that I learned. The most important lesson I learned pertains to the act of doing service. I realized that doing service or volunteering cannot be thought of monolithically. Volunteering cannot be encapsulated by only one individual's past experiences because the act of doing service is diverse due to the multitude of causes organizations are committed to addressing, as well as the varying degree of roles that a volunteer might fulfill through doing service. I learned through my experiences that I came into my service experience with expectations and ideas of what I would be doing and how I would be helping out the NGO I was paired with, Association Santé Pour Tous. Although this service experience occurred in an entirely different part of the world, my expectations that I formed about what my service would look like from my experiences back home influenced me while I served in Rabat. This perspective was probably why I was so surprised to find out that I was the first American volunteer to work at Association Santé Pour Tous. My thinking could also be why I was surprised that the clinic I worked at did not have some of the resources I was used to seeing in similar organizations back home. By the end of my 6 weeks in Morocco, I valued the lesson that taught me to not let previous service experiences shape my expectations in terms of what I should expect because every organization has a different reason for being, needs, and expectations of volunteers.



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# ABEL YOSEF – MOROCCO

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I created both a Facebook page and website for Association Santé Pour Tous. I also created a database where I found and listed international organizations/foundations that might help a NGO like Santé Pour Tous with supplying more resources and monetary donations. After completing this work on behalf of the Association, I hope to continue my commitment to service back on campus and also encourage people I know to do the same. My role as Community Service Chair of Vanderbilt's African Student Union (ASU) will help me encourage more people to take an active role in the Nashville community whether it be at the service events or projects I wish to organize for ASU or on their own. Hopefully, I can serve as a positive role model for my peers to follow as I commit to becoming more involved with the Nashville community.



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Nichols Humanitarian  
Fund

RECIPIENTS OF THE NICHOLS  
HUMANITARIAN FUND FROM THE  
VANDERBILT LAW SCHOOL

Three students from the Vanderbilt Law School were selected to receive the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for the 2015-2016 academic year. This portion of the fund allows students at the Law School to pursue humanitarian legal work in communities where they can work to address an area of need. In past years, students have worked with the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights, and the American Bar Association Center for Human Rights.

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## RACHEL Z. JOHNSON – INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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This past summer, I had the amazing privilege to work in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia on the Radovan Karadzic defense team. The Trial Chamber handed down the judgment convicting Dr. Karadzic in March and we were working on the appeal. Our team at the The Hague was small: two lawyers and two interns, including myself. During the course of the summer, I drafted one section of the appeal and researched other topics to bolster arguments that were already written.

As a first-year law student, I had learned the fundamentals of doing legal research and writing appeal briefs. But one incredible aspect about this experience was applying that skill set to an actual case. Additionally, the first-year curriculum at law schools in the United States largely—if not exclusively—focuses on domestic jurisprudence. At the ICTY, I was at the heart of international criminal law. Visiting Dr. Karadzic was probably the most memorable event of my summer. Though lawyers are allowed to meet with their clients in the detention center, interns had never before been allowed behind the barbed wire gates. At the beginning of my internship, Peter Robinson, Dr. Karadzic's primary attorney, filed the paperwork requesting that my fellow intern and I be allowed to meet with Dr. Karadzic in the detention center to discuss the appeal with him. I was told, however, to expect that the request would be denied. But much to everyone's surprise, the request was accepted and my fellow intern and I were allowed to accompany Peter.

Security involved going through two metal detectors, several locked gates, and I was not allowed to bring in anything other than paper and pen (lawyers can bring laptops). We met in a small room, and Dr. Karadzic offered us ice cream, sodas, and chocolate. For two hours we talked about the case, Brexit, the history of Yugoslavia, and Dr. Karadzic's travels in the United States during his year as an exchange student at Columbia University.

The visit was fascinating. I was able to meet the person I was working for, and hear his own perspective on what happened during the war. But it was also jarring. Dr. Karadzic was convicted of truly heinous crimes: genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. I had spent weeks pouring over the historical record and knew in great and horrifying detail the harms caused to individuals during Yugoslavia's dissolution and how hateful, racially charged rhetoric was employed to justify treating certain ethnicities inhumanely. But the man I spoke with seemed far removed from that, was an intelligent and engaging speaker. It was difficult to reconcile the actions attributed to him with the innocuous person sitting before me.



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## RACHEL Z. JOHNSON – INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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In criminal justice, whether domestic or international, there is a lively debate about why people should be imprisoned. A common reason given for imprisonment is to remove the most dangerous people from society, but most people would concede that Dr. Karadzic is not a danger to society now. However, there are other justifications for punishing people for past actions. The ICTY was founded on the premise that prosecuting the worst perpetrators of war crimes would serve as a strong deterrence to the worst atrocities in future wars. Imprisonment of notorious generals and politicians also brings justice to victims, and hopefully enables reconciliation throughout the former Yugoslavia.

During the course of my internship, I became even more convinced that this goal of justice and reconciliation is only possible when both sides are equally represented. Criminal justice is only just when both prosecution and defense have the resources and the opportunity to defend their respective sides. The experience deepened my interest in criminal law, and I am excited to continue exploring the field. I am incredibly grateful for the support of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund that gave me an introduction to the complexities of the legal side of international humanitarian law.



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## OLIVIA MARSHALL – OFFICE OF THE PARDON ATTORNEY

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This summer, I was an intern at the Department of Justice, in the Office of the Pardon Attorney (OPA). There, I reviewed clemency petitions submitted by federal inmates and made recommendations as to whether or not clemency should be granted. Petitioning for executive clemency is a long process. First, a federal inmate must submit his or her clemency petition to OPA. An inmate does this either on his or her own, or with the help of an attorney. Through President Obama's 2014 Clemency Initiative, many prisoners were identified as possible candidates for clemency and received the assistance of attorneys working pro bono. After a petition is submitted, a staff member at OPA reviews it. Petitions were evaluated using certain criteria; for example, petitioners who were nonviolent, low-level drug offenders who would be serving a lower sentence if convicted of the same crime today were considered good candidates for clemency. Good conduct in prison was also taken into consideration. Once a staff member has reviewed a petition and made a recommendation, the recommendation is approved by the Pardon Attorney and is sent to the Deputy Attorney General's office, which gives its own recommendation. Finally, the recommendations are sent up to the White House, where President Obama and his staff make a final decision.

The first round of commutations President Obama granted while I was working at OPA was in early June. The President granted 42 commutations that day, and many recipients were serving life sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. A few days after I left OPA, the President granted 214 commutations. This was the largest number of commutations in one day by any president in history and brought the total to 562 commutations during his presidency. That day, as I scrolled through the list of names of individuals who received clemency, I was not expecting to see any of the cases I had worked on among them. I was only at OPA for a brief time and expected that if any of my cases were commuted, it would be much later. Then I saw a name that made my heart flip over. It seemed that at the last minute, the President had added one of my cases to the commutations list. I was overjoyed – this particular case had really struck a nerve with me and I was desperately hoping this individual would have his sentence commuted. He had served 16 years of a mandatory 30-year sentence for two counts each of possession of a firearm and possession of crack cocaine. For confidentiality reasons, I cannot share specific details of the case; but I knew this individual did not deserve the 30 years he had been sentenced to. Even the 16 years he had already served were unjust.

Reviewing petitions was often a very moving experience. Most prisoners expressed deep remorse for their offenses and a desire to become a productive citizen upon being released from prison. Many prisoners had dedicated their time in prison to bettering themselves, taking advantage of vocational and educational classes offered by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and earning their GEDs. Prisoners wrote eloquently about their desire to be with their loved ones and many expressed sadness that their children were growing up without a parent.

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## OLIVIA MARSHALL - OFFICE OF THE PARDON ATTORNEY

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My internship at OPA was one of the best jobs I've ever had. I was so thrilled to be part of a team helping to correct past injustices and undo some of the damage caused by the War on Drugs. There are still thousands of petitions waiting to be reviewed, and there is uncertainty about whether the next president will be as committed to clemency as President Obama was. But the best we can do is keep chipping away at past wrongs, because to help even one person get out of prison and reunited with their family makes all the hard work worth it.





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# ALEXANDRE TODOROV – NAVAJO NATION

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For two months, I slept on a conference table in the middle of the high Utah desert. The nearest airport was a six hours drive away, and going to the theatre involved 100 miles of driving. I woke up in a puddle of my own sweat more than a few times. Twice, my morning alarm was a centipede on my face. And I'd do it all over again.

This summer, the Nichols Fund stipend paid for my legal work on the Navajo Nation. This involved representing members of the most poverty stricken region of our country against pay day lenders, debt collectors, repossession agents, and others who sought to take advantage of who they felt were weak. My organization served to correct this notion. What I brought to the table was a strong background in research and writing. Many members of my organization were tribal court advocates, lacking legal degrees. They could run circles around any attorney within the courtroom. But often times, they needed my help to get there. Legal conflict is about balance of relative power. When opposing counsel is a graduate of a top school with all the research tools in the world, I was proud to offer similar resources to our attorneys.

This included handling a matter of first impression in New Mexico. Shockingly, for over 25 states, there is no law on how long a collector has to file suit on credit card debts. Our client was faced with a \$4,000 suit that she could not pay. The lawyer handling the matter was overloaded with cases, and did not have the 60 hours to do the research needed to win the case. I was given the case to see what I could do. Luckily, the debt was in between two time limits, which gave an opening. Not only was I able to get the suit dismissed, through extensive research into other states, our organization is now circulating my work around the country. Many credit card companies use the law of a single state, meaning that, while the actual time may vary, the legal reasoning behind choosing a shorter limit can apply nationwide. This has already given other lawyers a chance to fight back against debt collections cases.

However, the most important lesson I learned was not when to take action, but when not to. It is easy to place your own crusade in front of your client's needs. I ran into this working on a repossession case. A family was about to lose their mobile home. While negotiating over restarting payments, they blurted out that they could pay at the same level they had previously, \$700 per month. Meanwhile, my managing attorney and I had gotten the amount reduced to \$500. We were immensely frustrated, and following our clients' wishes was the hardest thing I did during my time on the Nation. \$700 was only possible if everything kept on going right, even one missed payment would result in the automatic loss of the home. But for our clients, this was a matter of pride. They had failed a debt, and Navajo culture demanded they back their words with deeds. We could have stopped them, we could have convinced them not to go through on it. Lord knows, a strong part of me wanted to. But it was not my choice, it was theirs.

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# ALEXANDRE TODOROV – NAVAJO NATION

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I plan to continue my work operating in the complex murk that is the intersection of sovereignty. My career goals are to establish a practice in international asset recovery and anti-corruption. These require being responsive to the needs of clients from vastly different cultures, not just my own views of what justice is. For example, many asset recovery drives have had to be frozen, to ensure peace maintenance in fragile nations. To give impunity to those who starve their own citizens to pay for pink champagne strikes deeply into everything I believe in. But the French have a much better word for “lawyer”, avocat. I am an advocate. I speak for my client, not myself. And if my client wants to pay \$700 a month, or if they want a kleptocrat to walk free and enjoy his stolen earnings, then my job is to be their voice. Because they are the ones who have to deal with the repercussions of my actions, and it is their decision to make.



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# OFFICE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND SERVICE

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Embedded in the rich intellectual setting of Vanderbilt, OACS aims to support the university to achieve an undergraduate experience that exposes students to a wide variety of perspectives and immersion experiences aimed at educating the whole person while cultivating lifelong learning. This is done by creating service immersion experiences that give every undergraduate an opportunity to engage, to question, and to create change locally, and globally. OACS creates trans-institutional programming, including programming that embraces the centrality of public health and other thematic experiences central to the strategic mission of the university, through supporting and advising students and student service groups and through leveraging and embedding the use of digital technology to foster interaction and learning between students and the communities in which they serve.



The Office of Active Citizenship and Service (OACS) provides programming that encourages students to engage with the local and global community with the mission to create a culture for exploration and learning on campus followed by critical reflection and action for the common good.

OACS offers opportunities to Vanderbilt students, including a diverse array of global service immersion projects and internship programs. OACS' suite of Global Service Immersion Projects provide students with an opportunity to engage with critical issues of inequity in a globalized world through engaging in community-based service.

To find out more about our local, national and international service opportunities offered through OACS visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs).



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# NICHOLS HUMANITARIAN FUND 2015 – 2016

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