

Ubuntu Projects Abroad™



Volunteer Ben Price helps at the Lavender Hill Community Centre, teaching sport and playing games!

Freedom Day

What is the significance of the 27th of April, Freedom Day? It's the first democratic election in South Africa!

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South Africa Celebrates 14 Years of Democracy



Freedom Day- April 27th



The 27th of April 1994 was a monumental day in South African history. After more than fifty years of a government system based on institutionalized racism, apartheid (in Afrikaans meaning “apartness”), South Africans from all over the country, no matter what race came together to vote in the first ever democratic election. That is why the 27th of April is considered “Freedom Day” and celebrated by South Africans as a public holiday.

The 27th of April marked a day for a new future, a new start and new opportunities for some of the previously disadvantaged and oppressed population in South Africa under apartheid law. After spending

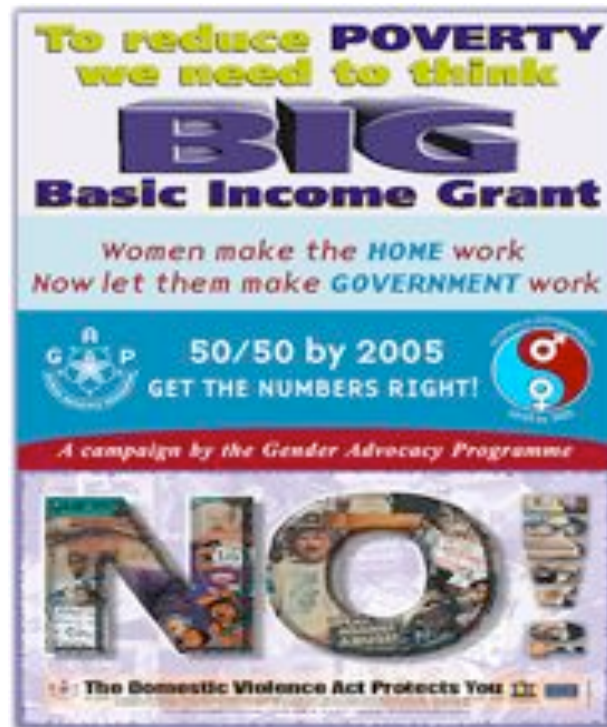
over 20 years in jail as a political prisoner, Nelson Mandela was elected president with a sweeping majority of 62.7% at age 76, representing the African National Congress (ANC), a political group that was widely banned and members were specifically targeted by violence by the former Nationalist government.



Mandela had quite the work cut out for him when he took presidency, with a population of 6 million unemployed, 10 million without access to running water and 20 million with no electricity!

The ANC government continues to struggle with these issues today, but South Africa as a country has finally become united and aspiring to be the “Rainbow Nation” as it has been referred to by Archbishop Tutu. Happy Freedom Day!

New Human Rights Placements



The **Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP)** is an independent, non-governmental advocacy and lobbying organisation based in Cape Town. GAP sees their position as bridging the gap between women in civil society and structures of governance and to increase the participation of women in policy formulation and decision-making. They conduct research and training in order to facilitate, mobilise, link and empower women to lobby for equity between men and women in all spheres of South African society.

GAP's main aim is to serve as a conduit between key decision-makers and marginalised women. They seek to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in structures of power and decision-making at all levels of government, political parties and communities. To achieve this, GAP focuses on the needs identified by marginalised women, urban and rural, and seeks to create a space for women to effectively influence political decision-making, legislation and policy. To ensure that they represent the experiences and interests of women from marginalised communities, they facilitate interaction between decision-makers and women from civil society.

GAP has adopted the role of "policy midwives", by translating the legal jargon of legislation into accessible language so that marginalised women can advocate and lobby for themselves. Integral to their work is communication and networking with legislators and policy-makers to lobby them to ensure that legislation and state policy reflect the needs of marginalised women. Due to the nature of their work, GAP makes a concerted effort to network with relevant role players to strengthen attempts to influence government policy, legislation and decision-making processes, and ultimately contribute to a society where women and men are equal.

New Human Rights/Law Placements



Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons

“The experience of South Africa and of all people everywhere has taught that in order for the rights and freedoms embodied in constitutions to be realized, they must become a part of everyday reality of citizens’ lives and the institutions protecting them much be deeply entrenched”

-Nelson Mandela (1998)

The Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons aims to improve and enhance the quality of life in the prison systems in South Africa, by annually monitoring and gathering data on the daily lives of prisoners and what improvements have been made since the implementation of a democratic constitution in 1994.

The rights of prisoners are accessed by the JIOP through various methods. Independent Prison Visitors (IPVs) are appointed by the Inspecting Judge and they make regular visits to the prisons, interview prisoners, and record complaints received from prisoners.

Prisoners and prison systems are plagued with numerous problems that the JIOP is trying to rectify through IPV's information. These include shortage of staff, prison overcrowding, prisoner transfers, lack of medical staff and facilities, HIV/AIDS, infrastructure and maintenance, staff development needs, assaults, lack of rehabilitation programs, security, ineffectiveness of parole boards and gangsterism.

*(See Volunteer Stories to read about Leo McAuley's experience at the Judicial Inspectorate!!)

Rainbow Educare's 10th Year Anniversary!!



The 5th of April 2008 marked the Rainbow Educare's 10 Year Anniversary! It was a beautiful occasion, creche owner and principle, Faranaaz Johnston paid attention to every detail at the Vrygrond Community Centre, where the event took place. The community centre was filled with community members, students, funders and of course Projects Abroad volunteers and Dana and Alyssa! The day was filled with inspirational speakers telling stories of how far Rainbow has come since ten years ago, because of not only support from the community but also from international attention! Our volunteers have been helping and assisting in the creche for the past year, and were given many thanks, including a photo collage hung on the wall with photos of all the past volunteers!

We saw the youth do a dance performance, the cricket team do a singing performance, Faranaaz's daughter do a spiritual dance and Faranaaz and the staff do a dance routine! It was a wonderful day and we are happy to continue to support and send volunteers to the Rainbow for years to come!



Outstanding Volunteers!

This section features some of our volunteers who have gone above and beyond their call of duty! Initiative and creative thinking is the best combination when you are a volunteer! Thanks for all your hard work guys!

Olympics and Ice Cream!

Melissa Kroslak and Sarah Bell

Melissa and Sarah, Sport and Teaching volunteers, organized a school wide competition for all the students in order to win an Ice Cream party! The students from Fairview Primary in Grassy Park learned all about being a team player, working hard and keeping their fields clean!

Thanks Sarah and Melissa!



Dirty Weekend- Fairmont Library Gets a Facelift!

Penny Whyte

Penny Whyte proposed a Dirty Weekend project to help beautify the Fairmont Secondary School Library, with the help from other volunteers and school staff, Penny had the library looking like new after they were finished! Well done!



Outstanding Volunteers, (continued)...



Sports Equipment Donations Ben Price

Ben Price started working even before he arrived in South Africa, by raising over 800 GBP in the United Kingdom, to buy sport gear for his placement here in South Africa! With this money he bought a ton of much needed sport equipment for his school, Parkwood Primary. He is now able to be a more productive Sport volunteer with all the equipment, as before Ben, the school had none!

Thanks Ben!



Potty Time! Jolanda Vroling

Jolanda, a Care volunteer, helped raise funds from the Netherlands to purchase a much needed toilet for the Rainbow Educare creche in Vrygrond, where she worked for 3 months. Before Jolanda's donation, 50+ children were sharing one toilet!

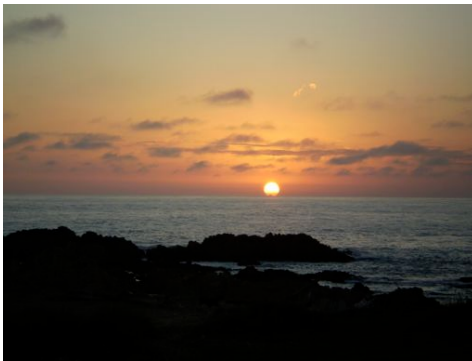
Thank you Jolanda!

Weekend Trip and Socials

Weekend Trip to Buffalo Bay and Knysna



For our March Volunteer Trip, we cruised down the Garden Route in search of beaches, relaxation and fun! On the N2 freeway we passed through the vineyards, down to the coast to Mossel Bay where the official start of the Garden Route begins. Passing through thick forests, floral sanctuaries on the windy, rugged coastal highway, we finally arrived in Buffalo Bay! Buffalo Bay is an oasis for those who really want to get away from it all, the white sandy beach stretches for miles, the surfing is impeccable and development is scarce! We stayed the night in the Buffalo Bay Backpackers, where we met people from all over the world, tasted a traditional South African braai supper and watched the bright stars before heading off to bed.



We made a bold excursion into the Goukamma Nature and Marine reserve which is famous for its marine life, bottle-nosed dolphins and whales off the shoreline and coastal fynbos. We decided to tackle the Coastal Hike, a 10km trek in the hot sunshine! Before beginning our hike, we realized that in order to even get to the trail head we had to use our woman (and one man) power to pull the "ferry" across a river! We managed to do this with no casualties and had a laugh the whole way!

We also enjoyed a day in Knysna, checking out the local shops and quaint town famous for its oysters! The volunteers also visited the Knysna Elephant Park, where they learned a lot about elephant conservation and rehabilitation. Jolanda Vroling, Ruth Hamilton and Lindsay Smith gave them some exercise by riding on their backs! We had a great trip, can't wait to come back!

SKELETON GORGE HIKE



This month our volunteers went on a grueling hike up the Table Mountain range, on a trail, called Skeleton Gorge, the name says it all. It is filled with ladders and steep climbing, we made it to the top and took advantage of the decline down to the bottom!



Conservation Update



Written by: David Pugh, Conservation Assistant and Desk Officer

The last month at Legodimo Nature Reserve has indeed been a busy one. The Volunteers have been busy mapping the reserve using the GPS, naming existing roads and some of the geographical landmarks. The creation of a new road, linking two of the existing main roads, in the Northern half of the reserve is well underway and making good progress.

After a few quiet weeks it has been wonderful to see the return of the elephants to Legodimo. Not only have we had good visuals at the main water hole in the North, they are now coming to visit us in camp on an almost daily basis. One particular night a bachelor herd of bulls moved past camp only some 30 meters from where we were sitting. As they moved into the Limpopo river we walked down to the bank and watched them feeding and drinking only a few meters away, a truly breath taking experience!

Having had a flurry of leopard sightings in February, the visuals of these elusive predators has begun to dry up somewhat. However, they are still around us constantly and we hear them calling around the camp at night and a couple of weeks ago we even heard a pair mating and although it was too dark to see anything, it is none the less something that very few people are privileged to witness.

The month concluded with a trip to the Okavango Delta and Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls. As with most things in Africa, they never always go according to plan, some car problems meant that the Delta part of our trip had to be bypassed due to lack of time and decided to push on to Zimbabwe. Victoria Falls was no disappointment and the boat trip down the mighty Zambezi River made it all worth while. A couple of the volunteers were so excited that they decided to throw themselves off a bridge with an elastic band tied to around their legs!

After returning from our trip there was no time to rest before popping over the border to South Africa and Venetia Nature Reserve where an annual mountain bike race was taking place, the event known as Bike for Beasts, which raises money for endangered animals and in particular the African wild dog. It was a wonderful day and a great opportunity for the volunteers to see another side of conservation as well as a surprise appearance from the dogs themselves.

Volunteer Stories

Volunteer Stories are a way for our volunteers to write about their experiences in South Africa, whether it be a funny happening, cultural misunderstanding, travel and leisure, anything! Living in a new place, far from home, there is bound to be comical encounters and interesting insights gained from learning about new cultures and ways of thinking. Also, upcoming volunteers are encouraged to introduce themselves and tell a little bit about what you expect out of your time here in South Africa!

Written by: Leo McAuley, first Human Rights/Law volunteer at the Judicial Inspectorate

The Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons exists to provide oversight on the treatment and conditions of prisoners and where necessary to facilitate the inspection of prisons. As the inaugural Projects Abroad intern with the JIoP I undertook my position with feelings of both trepidation and intrigue. Less than three weeks later I can easily say my decision to volunteer here was a good one.

On my second day I visited Voorberg Correctional Centre to meet inmates in their cells and help them understand their human rights. You soon learn that inmates simply want to talk to someone different and be shown dignity, so a friendly and laid back manner goes a long way to making a prison visit fulfilling.

Since then I have been as far away as Bloemfontein to participate in meetings with Independent Prison Visitors who do invaluable work in recording and resolving inmate complaints and providing the JIoP with the information it needs. I also met correctional officials and inmates in Kimberley Correctional Centre where I took photographs in the awaiting trial section to highlight overcrowding.

When I am not meeting with IPV's or inmates I am in the office in downtown Cape Town helping to write reports, reading about apartheid and prison gang history and I have even been to a conference on African Constitutionalism at University of Cape Town with a colleague who is doing further study. My work colleagues go out of their way to make you feel at home and I am never going to have a boring weekend with the invitations I have received that are extended to all Projects Abroad volunteers, not that you could have a boring weekend in Cape Town!



Awaiting trial prisoners, who must remain anonymous, demonstrating the overcrowding in their cell, where they sleep on mattress's on the floor



Overcrowding means this mattress is occupied by two awaiting trial prisoners

Volunteer Stories Continued...

Melissa Krosiak- Sports Volunteer at Fairview Primary in Grassy Park



My experience with Projects Abroad was one that can be summarized as no other than life changing.

I completed my volunteer work in Cape Town, South Africa. I prepared myself for the trip, memorizing my Frommer's guidebook and decided I knew everything there was to know about Cape Town. I was wrong. When I arrived I realized this beautiful city, so geographically and culturally diverse, had a personality and liveliness to it that could not be adequately

explained in text books or captured in pictures. It could only be understood through experience.

I resided in a suburb of Cape Town called Grassy Park. In this town, shacks and small houses dot the streets leading you to a downtown occupied with shops and bakeries and filled with a community of struggle, strength and pride. Initially, I felt slightly nervous to be in an unfamiliar setting. This quickly dissipated. I cannot pinpoint an exact moment that caused this; however, I can clearly recall when I realized I was no longer regarded as just a visitor in the neighborhood. I was going for a run one morning and I had left a little later than usual. Because of this, there were a lot of people filling the streets. I would say in a 15 minute period I was greeted by about 7 mothers and their children as "teacher Melissa" and one of the mini bus drivers yelled "go America!" outside the window as he sped by. I even heard one little boy point to me and tell his father "that's my coach!" It was during that time that I felt not only accepted, but truly a part of the Grassy Park community.

My host family was wonderful. There were four female volunteers, including myself, in the home and their own four daughters as well. Naziema, our host mother, did an incredible job taking care of her "eight daughters." Her knack for detail impressed me greatly and she loved exchanging information and stories of our own cultures. Naziema would listen intently to my accounts from home, my work and my schooling experience. Some of my fondest memories are talks we had over a cup of tea at night. I can still recall her shocked giggle that resounded whenever something about my home surprised her. Naziema's kind voice would recount her personal stories as well as stories of friends and neighbors. I received much of my Cape Town community education right in her kitchen. Her four daughters truly became like sisters, hanging out in our room at night, sharing laughs, pictures and reminiscences. Time passed trying on clothing and discussing life matters that I found are not separated by passports or country lines on a map.

My volunteer work proved equally as enjoyable as home life. I had come with hopes to do something incorporating athletics but was not sure of the most effective way to do so. I worked with the school principal and with Dana and Alyssa, the Projects Abroad coordinators, to formalize what I would be doing for my project. I organized what in America would be the equivalent of a gym class. Prior to my arrival the only athletic experience the students had was running; mainly around pieces of trash that were utilized as cones. The excitement on the kids' faces when they saw the athletic equipment I brought was incredibly gratifying. Their appreciation reminded me of how lucky I really am to have grown up surrounded by such luxuries often mistaken for certainties.

Volunteer Stories Continued...

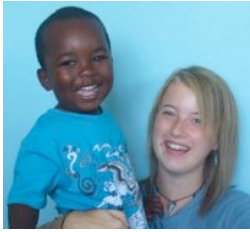
Gym class turned into an Olympic competition, each class would choose a different country, research it and represent it during events. I loved walking through the school hearing students yell out in unison “Go team Botswana!” “Go Italy!” “Coach, Russia is going to win, right!?” Their enthusiasm filled the buildings. One of the events we did was called a team squeeze. This was something very special to me because my college field hockey team did this before games. The students would form a circle holding hands. I would start the squeeze with the student on my left and simultaneously start my timer. The watch would stop when I received a squeeze back from the student on my right. The classes loved this! I was shocked how receptive and enthusiastic they were with this exercise. I felt that they really understood the importance of focus and teamwork. They worked so hard to improve their time by just a few seconds, encouraging each other and standing silently awaiting the squeeze. One of my classes first scored 43 seconds. For their final try they scored 7.2 seconds. The smiles on each of their faces as they rushed the middle of the circle, pumping their fists in the air and screaming out loud was unlike anything I had seen. They were so proud of themselves and so proud of each other. Later, I discovered that it wasn't the fancy field hockey sticks, obstacle courses or shiny soccer balls but rather this simple exercise that proved their favorite; yet another instance where I learned to treasure simplicities in life.

Before I had left my home in the busy city of Boston, Massachusetts, I assumed I would be making a sacrifice coming to South Africa and extracurricular time would be limited. Once again, I was wrong. My time after school and weekends was quite busy! I still cannot believe the amount I experienced in such a short time and I can confidently say that is truly because of the Projects Abroad staff. They shared their knowledge of the program, the culture and different activities. Their passion for the city was contagious and they encouraged me to embrace every opportunity and live the culture there. They did not want me to merely be a touristy visitor of the region; rather, they wanted me to live the society. This basic ideal made all the difference in my stay. Thanks to their guidance I was able to accomplish more than I had hoped, including sampling incredible wines right at the vineyard, seeing the most beautiful animals only feet away on a safari, playing soccer barefoot with African tribal children, learning the township culture as I tasted their cuisines, hiking amazing trails, seeing the city from Table Mountain, witnessing the pain and struggle endured during apartheid at the District Six Museum and on Robben Island, watching the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen, learning to surf, sampling incredible foods, enjoying local linguistics and idiosyncrasies and my favorite of all, chatting with neighbors and drivers as we rode the mini buses throughout town.

I could not speak more highly of a program or of a city and would recommend it to anyone with a desire to learn, help others and encounter life changing experiences. I am forever grateful for the opportunity I was given in Cape Town and will treasure each memory made. I left South Africa with only one regret- that I could not stay longer!

Volunteer Stories Continued...

Written by: Sara Glen, Care and Community Volunteer at the Rainbow Educare in Vrygrond



Hey guys, I'm Sara, I'm from Scotland. I've just spent 6 amazing months out in Cape town doing Care and community work. I spent Mondays to Fridays working in Rainbow Educare Crèche in Vrygrond which is one of the oldest townships in Cape town. I've found the people there to be the most giving and friendly people I've ever met. You get to know the locals pretty well working in the area, and they get to know you. People like to take an interest in you, in what you're doing in Cape town and where you come from. They were amazed that I had come all the way out from the

UK to work in a crèche in their area.

Rainbow Educare was set up and has been run for the last ten years by Faranaaz Johnson. (principal) Her mother, who we called, "Mama", does all the cooking for the children, who get porridge in the mornings and lunch. Then, there are the four teachers, Teacher Winky, who looks after the toddlers who are in nappies still, Teacher Rochelle, who looks after the kids who are in potty training up to the age of 3. Teacher Loelle, who looks after the 3-4 year olds and then Teacher Chantal, who looks after the 4-5 years olds. I would like to think I was close with all of them, we had some good laughs in the time I was there. Rainbow also underwent some changes when I was there. When I first arrived, the ceiling leaked when it rained, the kids had to wear coats inside! The tiled floors were breaking up, and there weren't many learning materials available to the children. However, through the help of Projects Abroad, they now have new floors, the whole crèche has been painted, the ceiling is fixed and there are many more books and toys for the kids. It can only keep getting better.

The kids there, made me laugh so much. They are so full of love and can be so cheeky! When the new year started, two other volunteers, Lindsay and Jolanda and I, had to look after a class of 20 1-3 year olds. I think that was one of the best weeks I ever had at Rainbow, was so much fun, although, we went home at night completely shattered! The kid's had toys everywhere, food got everywhere at meal times, pandemonium most of the time to be honest, but we got to sit and play with the kid's and bond with them and that was the best bit. There's one little boy who I became particularly close with. His name is Luciano. He constantly made me laugh. When I first arrived at the Crèche, I remember coming in every morning and Luciano would be crying because his mum left him. In the New Year, we all saw a difference in him. He grew up. I remember Teacher Loelle telling me that one morning, he walked through the gate with his bag on his back, waved goodbye to his mum and walked through the door to the classroom. Bearing in mind he is only 2 years old! He also liked camera's, mobile phones, anything really. All the kids loved it when you got the camera out and they loved seeing their pictures after.

During the day the kids follow a routine, involving learning numbers, the days of the week, months of the year, the weather, they sing songs and learn themes on safety, family and more. In between all this, they get snack time, lunch, and go outside (when the weather's good) to play. I can't describe how much I miss Rainbow and everyone there, and I'm hoping to go back sometime next year to see what else has changed and how much the kids have grown. Cape town has left a big impression on me and I would definitely recommend it to anyone thinking of going there.