



Tour of Durban

By Ryan O'Neal | August 21, 2012

The chance to spend 10 weeks in South Africa studying and learning medicine from brilliant people was the initial spark that led me to the IE3/CFHI internship. However, I soon learned that I would also be delving deep into the roots of South Africa not just spending my time learning on this medical internship. Everywhere in this country, people are affected by the past. My initial stay in South Africa was in Durban. A beautiful city with wonderful beaches, yet a ten minute drive away are extremely impoverished townships. Luckily, I had the opportunity to learn more of the history of South Africa from people who have experienced it and the remnants of the Apartheid.



I went on a tour of Durban with Ernest, my coordinators husband, and a man named Steven, Raina, and Selina. Ernest gave us a very good historical outlook on Durban during the Apartheid. People were categorized into 4 main categories: White, Black, Coloured, and Indian. Based on your ethnicity you were essentially pigeon holed into a way of life, with life for the Blacks and Coloureds being hardest and Whites being easiest. Once again, Steven was alive in his older teen years during Apartheid. He told us an interesting story of a boy who chased his dog across a boundary. These boundaries being dividing lines between the ethnicities and if you didn't have proper documentation you could be sent to jail. The boy essentially chased his dog across and was punished for it.



Ernest did a great job at painting a picture of the apartheid and the issues of the government in power currently. After showing us much of industrial Durban and taking us through Isipingo, we ended up near a rail line. Splitting the rail line was two sides. One in which many hostels were set up that were of very poor conditions. On the other side of the tracks were nice, for SA standards, houses. The nice area was for the Whites who were mainly supervisors and the hostel area was for the Blacks and other migrant workers who came there to work. Ernest segued beautifully from this old issue in South Africa to one of its current issues. The question "Do people still live in those very poor hostels?" was asked and the answer was "Yes." One of the major issues in South African currently is a housing crisis.

(RPD). We were then shown the township uMlazi, home to nearly one million South Africans. We were shown the areas of squatters and the water sources and illegal electricity sources.

The government said that these areas should be obliterated and placed some of these individuals into temporary housing that was only supposed to last 3-6 months. However, this has been going on for nearly 3 years now. Since housing is such an issue, when parents die due to disease or misfortune many children are left for naught. We then visited an orphanage started by a man named Abraham and his wife. They were very polite people who did this out of the kindness of their heart.

We then visited a place that was extremely interesting: How Long Park. A man named Michael had worked on this area of land for a very long time, making it beautiful. He did this on his own for a very long time then the government started employing him and paying him to do it as well as providing the materials needed. Now, it has become a very gorgeous park.



Durban is a very interesting city in that you can be in an extremely impoverished area and travel a very short distance and end up in a place such as How Long Park. A sentiment Ernest shared with me, that I completely agree with, is that Durban is a young democracy, but it will grow and fulfill its potential with time.