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## Societal & Cross-Cultural Reflections

1. *South Africans greet everyone and treat them as close friends or part of their community immediately upon first meeting.*

Everyone greets each other on the streets as Sisi or Buta, Mama or Papa. The relationship between everyone gives a very close-knit feel and warmth to the energy of the location. My first time walking the streets here, I was greeted by strangers on the sidewalk saying “Molweni sisi!” which translates to hello sister. It makes you feel very safe and automatically accepted by locals. I would say that it is a refreshing feeling to experience in comparison to the coldness of Americans back home, especially living near Washington, D.C. People do not act friendly to one another. One thing to note is that one must always be aware of one's surroundings, especially within the center of Cape Town. There are still a lot of people who will try to take advantage of the fact that you are American, even if you don't dress or speak like it. Be sure to always stay on your toes and read the situations you find yourself in.

2. *Budgeting extra money for transportation is a must!*

As a foreigner, it is safest to take an Uber places, especially if the walking directions take you through busy streets, as they are targets for pick-pocketing. Long St & Strand St in downtown Cape Town are not safe to walk on at night at all or during the day unless you are in a group of at least 3 people. Uber is cheaper here than in the U.S., but it adds up quickly, so budget extra money for transport. Uber drivers also get mad if you order an Uber Go, which is supposed to be for 2 people, even though the cars fit 3 people, and you have 3 people. Plus side is that Uber Go is cheaper than Uber X, but you will end up having to pay more if riding with more interns. The train and MyCiti Bus are more affordable options, but intimidating to use for the first time without the help of a local. So maybe try to make a few friends here first before trying those.

3. *There is no singular South African accent.*

This is something that threw me for a loop. Unlike accents from other regions in the world that are more uniform, South Africans have different accents. There are a few reasons why, but the main one is because there are providence/regional language differences that each carry their own slang and way of speaking along with cultures. Afrikaans, isiXhosa, and Zulu are the most commonly spoken languages in the Western & Eastern Cape, along with English. It is important to try your best to listen when people speak because a lot can get lost in translation, even if others are speaking to you in English. I have experienced this at work a lot. A lot of people at SANCCOB speak a minimum of 4 languages, English not being the first language. They are constantly translating sentences in their head and may say words that do not mean what they mean to say. It is always a good

idea to ask if you need more clarification, especially in an internship that requires a great deal of communication!

4. *Music is an important part of South African culture.*

Anywhere you go, music is playing. In stores, shops, on the street, markets, jazz bars, clubs, etc. Music is a staple of African culture in general, but specifically, it serves the role of unifying the diverse array of cultures found within South Africa. My favorite musical experience here is going to jazz nights and OpenWine in downtown Cape Town on Sunday nights. Jazz has always been one of my favorite musical genres. I have taken classes on its history, and I collect vinyls because of it. Being able to experience the city's nightlife in the jazz scene was invigorating. The energy was top-tier and is always an eye-opening experience. It reminded me of my first jazz jam in Washington, D.C. It is beautiful to see how music unites people.

5. *SANCCOB is an extremely physically & mentally demanding job.*

My internship at SANCCOB has been more intensive than I was told it was going to be. It took me a few weeks to adjust to working 6 days a week on 10-hour shifts. The work is physically demanding, too. You are constantly lifting heavy mats, big birds that like to flail in your arms to get away, or are getting scratched or bitten. It can be very overwhelming at times, yet it is rewarding to see the animals you are working with get released into the wild again. It is a mental struggle to keep up with, though. You are constantly being thrown around and ordered around to do ten different things at once, and it can be exhausting. A moment of reflection that I had regarding working for an NGO is that I do not think I would do it again unless they agreed not to increase my hours and paid for my transportation.