

Journey towards Justice

Reflections of Cape Town, South Africa and Human Trafficking in the 21st Century

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The Lumos Foundation Student Travel Award

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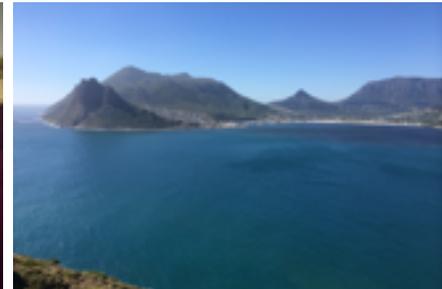
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¹ *Cape of Good Hope*, JoAnna Adkisson, Cape Town, 2014.

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“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness the prisoners.”

Isaiah 61:1



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The Lumos Award: Cape Town, South Africa

Six years ago, I found myself seated next to Anjeli on the curb of San Francisco’s Tenderloin district. She gripped the hot chocolate that I had handed her an hour earlier as she shared her story. I can vividly remember her inability to make eye contact, her scar-ridden arms, and defeated posture. As a victim of human trafficking, she wore her story and her pain everywhere she went.

It was Anjeli who started me on my journey towards justice when I was just 16 years old. The story of this young woman has weaved its way into my academics, career ambitions, leadership and volunteer experiences, and international work. It comes as no surprise, then, that Anjeli’s face was in my mind as I prepared my application for funding from The Lumos Foundation to travel and work with women like her in Cape Town, South Africa.

Through the generous funding provided by The Lumos Foundation, I purposed to contribute to a number of projects in partnership with The A21 Campaign that will be described in detail later in this report. My project goals are listed below and were given qualitative measurements as outlined in my initial proposal:

- Project planning and research with Director of Cape Town office
 - Will include travel to surrounding communities to
 - Conduct focus groups
 - Establish relationships with locals

² *Freedom on Table Mountain*, JoAnna Adkisson, Cape Town, 2014.

³ *Tembaletu After School Program*, JoAnna Adkisson, Cape Town, 2014.

⁴ *Sunsets on Lion’s Head*, JoAnna Adkisson, Cape Town, 2014.

⁵ *Haut Bay*, JoAnna Adkisson, Cape Town, 2014.

- Build a case for funding various South African projects
- Draft five year organizational plan (finalize results of 2013 feasibility study)
- Community partnership development with Director of Cape Town office
- Funding research
- African University curriculum development in collaboration with The A21 Campaign's U.S. office

These goals guided my experience in South Africa and set me on a course of self-discovery that would truly transform how I see justice and restoration of the most broken individuals in the world.

The A21 Campaign

The A21 Campaign was started in Sydney, Australia in 2008 with the intent to “Abolish Injustice in the 21st Century” through an initial emphasis on human trafficking. Since its inception, The A21 Campaign has successfully laid a four-tiered foundation that focuses on prevention and awareness throughout global communities, protection and intervention in the lives of victims of trafficking, prosecution that focuses on breaking the cycle at the source, and partnership with nonprofit organization, paragon government agencies, and international governments, alike. This success has been measured on a number of levels, but one of the most breathtaking numbers released in the 2013 Freedom Report was of the 118 victims who were rescued and cared for over the course of that year.

I began working with The A21 Campaign in the summer of 2012 as an intern in their administrative office based out of Newport Beach, California. The better part of my time was spent contributing to the initial buildout of a comprehensive awareness and prevention program for high school/university-aged students. This training was formalized in the months following my internship and implemented initially through Rotary International. The recognition that the curriculum received prompted a request from The A21 Campaign for me to join them in tailoring a similar program to the needs of South African students. I welcomed the opportunity to join my passion for justice with the generous extension of my beloved alma mater and the support of The Lumos Foundation and set out on my journey to Cape Town.

Human Trafficking

Global statistics tell us that over 29 million people are trapped in some form of modern day slavery.⁶ This number greatly exceeds the number of people enslaved in ancient times and numbers held during the Transatlantic slave trade. Trafficked peoples are “recruited, transported, transferred, harbored... by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, or coercion) for an [inhumane] purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation.”⁷ This happens in massage parlors, illegal brothels, fields, shipping boats, mines, and streets around the world.

South Africa's story of slavery is underscored by decades of racial segregation induced under Apartheid laws and preceded by legal slavery practices. What began as colonial slavery of people from across Africa by the Dutch in 1652 incubated a society based on racial oppression. While the legal constricts of slavery were generally abolished in 1806, the people under the thumb of this injustice were not free. In 1948, the National Party comprised of white Afrikaners won the majority of South Africa's parliament seats under the slogan of racial separation known as “apartheid”. In the years that followed, racial minorities, led by the African National Congress and represented globally by the leadership of Nelson Mandela, would contend against the regime. Finally in 1991, South African President F.W. de Klerk

⁶ *The Global Slavery Index*, International Labour Organization and other supporting documents, 2013.

⁷ *Palermo Protocol*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014

repealed all remaining apartheid laws and called for the drafting of a new constitution. It was not until then that the long held struggles of black and colored peoples were finally atoned.⁸

In the wake of apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to effectively review and reconcile human rights violations that manifested on all sides of the political aisle. While in South Africa, I had the privilege of reading through the seven volume Final Report of the TRC provided to me from the personal library of a member of the Commission. One of the most remarkable evenings of my time abroad was discussing with her the intimate stories and personal reflections of her time on the TRC and the self-discovery that took place as she contributed to her nation's history. Although controversial in some ways, the TRC has earned a great deal of my respect in its vision to both unveil human rights violations while simultaneously advancing justice in a way that eclipses the traditional penal system.⁹

While South Africa has made monumental advancements in democracy and the realization of freedom for all of its citizens, there are still grave consequences that have followed in the wake of longstanding racial oppression. One such reality is seen in the fact that 28,000-38,000 children are bought and sold as prostitutes in South Africa per year. The American State Department's Trafficking in Persons office has defined South Africa as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in all forms. Thus, people from around the world are brought into South Africa to support its tourist prostitution industry, those from northern African countries are brought to harbors/airports to be moved elsewhere in the world, and South Africans themselves are transported internationally to serve as sex slaves or forced laborers. With statistics like these, South African legislators were forced to take action. In July of 2013, following ten years of debate around the issue, the South African Parliament passed and formalized the Trafficking in Persons Bill to, again, change the course of history surrounding slavery in the country.

This is the reality that I stepped into when I arrived in Cape Town in January 2014. The new legislation was not yet enacted in bureaucratic offices throughout the country; many departments were in the midst of determining the best course of action for actualizing and complying with the numerous clauses outlined in the 51-page bill. Fortunately, The A21 Campaign and their counterparts throughout the country have brought in years of expertise in the field of counter-trafficking. As a result, A21 has been asked to work with various government offices and their extended operations throughout the country.



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⁸ *Apartheid Timeline (UN News Center)*, http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/discrim/race_b_at_print.asp

⁹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission)*, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>

¹⁰ *BECAUSE Bracelets*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.

¹¹ *Two Oceans Marathon*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.



Prevention and Intervention Work in South Africa

With so many historical changes happening in the country of South Africa leading up to my arrival, I have come to count it a great privilege to be present amidst such formative work. As described in the introduction, I came with a set of measurable goals initially prescribed in my initial Lumos proposal. While these goals did guide my experience in general, I quickly understood that the nature of international work means that plans often shift or are exceeded in ways not originally anticipated. In addition, The A21 Campaign is such a dynamic organization that I was coached in ways to expand these goals to maximize their reach and influence with far less effort.

1. Project planning and research with Director of Cape Town office

In my original proposal, I intended to conduct basic feasibility research to formulate a needs assessment and introduce strategic plans to guide A21's Cape Town office through the next 5 and 10 years. This aspect of my goals was actualized with the support of Katie Modrau, The A21 Campaign's South African Development Manager. We conducted focus groups in partnership with the Department of Social Services' Community Development Workers (CDW) in five different divisions of Cape Town Metro and outlying areas. Alongside these focus groups, we conducted the first phase of South Africa TIP Office's training of the July 2013 TIP Bill. The needs assessment rendered through these groups has been submitted to A21 Global and will be used in preparing funding proposals for key stakeholders in the organization.

2. Draft five year organizational plan (finalize results of feasibility study)

While I did not see a completed five-year strategic plan, I did have the incredible opportunity to prepare the first draft of The A21 Campaign's contribution to the U.S. State Department's 2013 TIP Report (See excerpt in photo below). The TIP Report is the most comprehensive analysis of governmental anti-trafficking efforts and is used by the U.S. Government to diplomatically advance counter trafficking work around the globe. Our piece of the report primarily discussed the nature of trafficking in the Western Cape, existing standards of care and victim assistance programs, and action items being implemented by government agencies, nonprofits, and communities alike following the passing of the July 2013 TIP Bill. Our report and those of other counter-trafficking agencies were aggregated to produce a graded synopsis of South Africa's response to human trafficking.

3. Community partnership development with Director of Cape Town office

While this goal was realized through the work outlined in the first point, the community partnership aspect of my trip far exceeded expectations and, therefore, deserves a bit more attention. In addition to trainings conducted with the DSS-CDW, I also took part in three

¹² *African Children*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.

¹³ *Instagram- Every Minute*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.

trainings with the South African Police Services (SAPS), HAWKS Organized-Crime Unit, and social workers within various law enforcement offices.

This partnership had been stewarded prior to my arrival, so when I joined the team we had the opportunity to act as the first point of contact for SAPS when a victim of trafficking was identified. I joined the investigations unit on three raids of suspected illegal brothels and a massage parlor. The SA Development Director and I took part in taking statements and consoling the women as the police conducted a full search of the facilities. Needless to say, these experiences were the most formative and humbling of my trip.

Finally, I had the unique experience of working with an up and coming technology company that develops phone applications for businesses and charities throughout Africa. Out of this, I developed an app that is compatible with basic feature phones used by a large percentage of the demographics that we as an organization have a vested interest in. This app is now being utilized in The A21 Campaign's school programme and used to conduct demographic-specific research in South African townships and other marginalized areas in the country.

4. Funding research

I completed a thorough analysis of potential funders for one new staff position for the A21 Cape Town office. I also reassessed the financial forecast for the school programme and prepared potential funding mechanisms for The A21 Campaign as they move into 2015.

5. African University curriculum development in collaboration with the U.S. office

Finally, I was able to complete a large portion of the University curriculum with the help of the volunteers to A21's school programme. The three women who helped me to revamp the curriculum are native South Africans who have attended University in country. As a team, we worked with the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Gender Studies programme to ascertain the appropriate mechanisms to both educate and empower students to impact change within the context of their careers. In addition, we offered support to the student leadership group heading up the annual Red Campaign (trafficking awareness week) and conducted a focus group to identify how students would be most effectively impacted through the content of A21's University curriculum.

Reflections: Dynamics of Advancing Justice

It had not yet been a week since I had left Cape Town that I found myself listening to the words of Bryan Stevenson, Founder and Director of the Equal Justice Initiative. His speech at the 2014 Justice Conference seemed to flawlessly depict and give language to the reflections that I had been reveling in for days and weeks. I think it very appropriate to outline his words here. He has appropriately called these lessons the "Dynamics of Advancing Justice"¹⁴:

1. "To advance justice, we have to commit ourselves to proximity- to get close to the people, concerns, and issues that matter to us."

Hearing the stories of some of the world's most broken and destitute people from across the table, sitting side by side on a curb, or on a dirty brothel floor, I can attest to the fact that you have to get close. Close enough to smell the stench of injustice; close enough to see each tear; close enough to make eye contact; and close enough to offer a hug that symbolizes that hope

¹⁴ *Dynamics of Advancing Justice*, Bryan Stevenson, The Justice Conference (Tom1stcom).

may actually still exist. South Africa revealed to me that the desires that I have to change lives do require that I get close to the broken.

2. “To advance justice, we have to change the narrative.”

I spent years trying to understand the stories of injustice. Whether in a classroom learning about racial oppression, political anarchy, economic disparities, war, crime, or the myriad of things that contribute to injustice, it seemed I could not quite grasp what my part was in changing all of this. What I learned then was that it is not enough to just understand the story, you have to change the narrative. This requires a great deal of sacrifice- to lay aside preconceived ideas and opinions and offer a hand or voice to aspects of injustice that must be moved to change the narrative. It's not just enough to *share* the story, you actually have to take part in *changing* that story.

3. “We have to be hopeful to create justice.”

Human trafficking is the most offensive and devastating abuse of human rights in the world's history. With numbers as high as 29 million and stories of pedophilia, rape, abuse, neglect, and murder in mind, it is very easy to lose hope. I would be lying if I said that I did not have moments in Cape Town where I felt that if I heard one more story of abuse, I would break. My mind replayed scenes of women my age facing the most traumatic nightmare for years on end.

Yet, I had to choose to believe in things that I could not see in those moments- I had to believe in restoration, I had to believe in freedom, and I have to believe that injustice can be abolished. That is the very definition of hope: to believe for what you cannot see in the here and now. For those of us committed to justice, we must place hope at the center- for the sake of every victim of hopelessness, we must continue to choose hope.

4. “To advance justice, we must choose to be uncomfortable.”

While seemingly the most obvious dynamic of justice, it is unquestionably the hardest to give yourself to. For me, being uncomfortable looked like a trip to the other side of the world with little idea of the culture or customs of the South African people and a great deal of insecurity about what I could even contribute to all of this. It looked like sitting in a parked car through the night to keep an eye out on a 13 year old girl standing on the corner to be sure she made it home the next morning with minimal abuse. On several occasions, it looked like hours with an elderly Thai masseuse whose documents had been taken from her years ago under the false promise that what she earned would be sent back to her two children if she just complied with her boss' inhumane work conditions.

If South Africa taught me one thing, it is how to be uncomfortable. I saw the value of persistent discomfort for the sake of justice as I toured Robbin Island during my last two weeks in Cape Town. This is the island where Nelson Mandela spent 18 years of his life as a convicted political prisoner. Through those years, he hunched over a bowl and chipped away at limestone during the day, but at night he wrote of freedom. He could have said no in adversity and discomfort. But in saying no then, he would have been saying no to the free South Africa that we now see. To him we all owe a great deal of admiration.

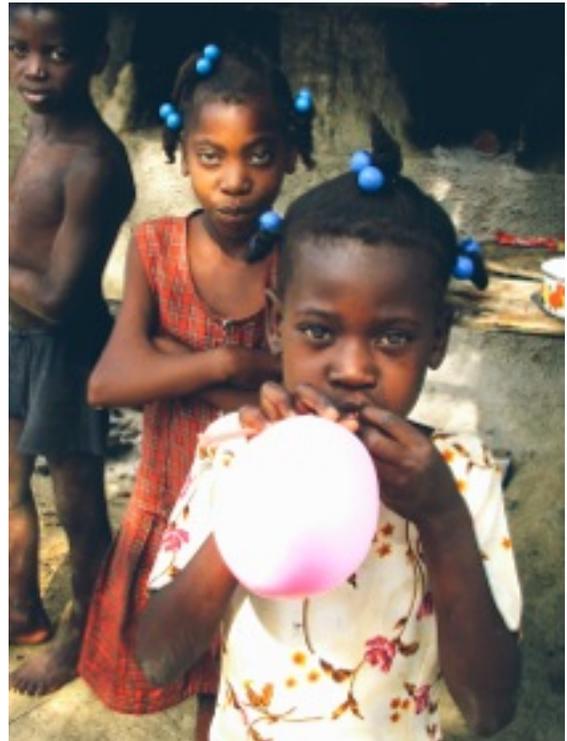
Justice has a way of finding the deepest part of you and staying put no matter where you are in your life or in the world. I found this to be true the moment I stepped off the plane and back onto American soil. What I saw and experienced in Cape Town cannot be represented by just words. This experience truly changed my life and has set me on a path to pursue restoration and justice no matter the sacrifice. Even

now, I am preparing to spend six months in Saudi Arabia as an extension of my work with The A21 Campaign and I sincerely hope that my work will continue in South Africa in the months that follow.

Nothing of value would have been accomplished or learned had it not been for the generous support of The Lumos Foundation, Belmont University's Faculty and Staff (specifically within the Study Abroad Office, Political Science Department, and Dr. John Gonas of Massey Business School), the remarkable people of The A21 Campaign, friends, family, and fellow justice-seekers near and far. I credit every lesson to those who believe that you only truly learn what you have truly lived. Thank you for joining me on the journey!



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¹⁵ *Young Boy*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.

¹⁶ *Balloon*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.

¹⁷ *Young Girl*, The A21 Campaign, 2014.