

The hidden moments of beauty in a South African village

Chelsea Coalwell '11
Contributing Writer

When my internship search began last fall I could have never imagined I would end up spending my summer in rural South Africa.

As a politics major, I assumed I would work at the State House and if I was lucky, end up on the Hill in Washington, D.C., Of course with the help of the Academic Internship Office, I discovered the vast possibilities of internships including the non-profit I ultimately worked with, ThinkImpact.

ThinkImpact is based out of D.C. but works primarily in several villages in the Manyeleti region of South Africa. This region is known for high HIV/AIDS rates, as well as an expansive unemployment problem. Even with aid organizations present, poverty still plagues the village. Admittedly, some of these problems stem from an obvious lack of infrastructure, but the bigger issue is the poor local economy which would help keep money in the villages and allow people to pull themselves out of poverty.

This is where ThinkImpact comes in, utilizing the model of Asset Based



Photo by Ian, Age 15

A little girl's photo is taken by one of the local boys in the village where Chelsea lived and interacted with the youth who had limited to no after school activities.

Community Development (ABCD), which takes a more futures-based look at poverty by focusing on assets and solutions rather than needs. Think Impact focuses on starting small, social businesses.

In support of this, I spent a fair amount of the summer getting to know the community members, inventorying their skills and looking for any serious interest from the community in starting a business.

Ultimately some of my fellow interns partnered with community members to start salons, community gardens, tutoring centers and carpentry shops. I, on the other hand, spent my time working on an advocacy project. After noticing a lack of afterschool activities coupled with high incidences of unprotected sex in teens, often leading to HIV and other problems, I knew I wanted to work with youth to help occupy their time more constructively.

As I began to think of ways to help the kids, what struck me most was their desire to use my camera. From the moment we arrived to the minute we left, there were always kids asking, "borrow me your camera?"

So, for my last four weeks in the village I let them do just that. I spent hours walking around with a variety of kids from ages five to sixteen allowing them to take pictures of whatever was most important to them. Through these photo sessions, I learned a lot about the village that an outsider would usually glance over. Now that I am back in the States, I will assemble the photos and share their view of the village with an audience that would never get the chance to see the village for themselves.

I have to admit that this summer was hard work. It took awhile to get used to living without running water and having rats crawling on the ceiling at night. It was also very difficult to accept the prevalence of polygamy, child abuse and HIV/AIDS. Though



Photo by Roger, Age 14

Chelsea Coalwell poses for a photo with some other members of the small South African village she resided in this past summer. Chelsea encouraged children to take pictures with her camera.

living in the village was at times difficult and emotionally draining, it also had its moments of beauty.

I will never forget watching the World Cup crammed in a tiny room with forty South Africans cheering as their team scored a goal, or the laugh the boys got out of teaching us dirty words and hand gestures in their local language.

I don't want to be cliché and say that this summer was "life changing" but it was pretty extraordinary. I not only learned what poverty is really like and the role of non-profits, I learned a lot about myself. I wouldn't change this summer for the world. I strongly recommend that anyone interested in doing an internship think big and take a risk, because you never know where you might end up.



Photo by S'bu, Age 16

A young man holds a soccer, or "football" with the logo of the 2010 World Cup, which was hosted by South Africa. Hosting the World Cup created an atmosphere of pride among the South African people.

Welcomed: "the views of all students regardless of viewpoint"

Jimmy Sengenberger '11
Contributing Reporter

Father Sheeran is well aware of me and my conservative activism on campus. When the university's president arrived at my table, where my family and I were seated, at the Family Weekend breakfast last September, he looked down at me and said, "So, what evil are you up to today, Jimmy?"

For many campus presidents, that signal might be the kiss of death. But not at Regis. In fact, this unorthodox greeting was playfully done with a smile on Father Sheeran's face, demonstrating the humor and lack of sincerity with the question. I don't quite know where he stands politically, but on the spectrum of academic freedom, his institution definitely lays 100% behind it.

I recently watched the film *Indoctrinate U*, an excellent, insightful documentary about the extreme left-wing, liberal bias on college campuses in America. The film explores the common practice among universities and colleges across the country—the so-called "safe-havens" of academic freedom—to shun or disadvantage expressions of conservative views on campus, including students, faculty and staff.

Wikipedia defines academic freedom as "the belief that the freedom of inquiry by students...is essential to the mission of the academy, and that

scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas...without being targeted for repression, job loss or imprisonment."

While there is, most students seem to agree, a decidedly liberal slant amongst Regis faculty (as with most universities), when it comes to student expression of views, Regis deserves credit for standing true to the doctrine of academic freedom. In doing so, they permit various views on political and religious issues to be expressed, including right-wing perspectives, which are often discriminated against on college campuses.

For example, the Highlander welcomes the views of all students, regardless of ideology or viewpoint, to join the staff or submit letters to the editor. Oftentimes, conservative students are passed over from publishing political op-eds on a consistent basis due to their political viewpoint, and I've heard stories about discrimination against conservatives in paper leadership positions and conservative student newspapers.

I know of no one, including me, who has encountered any problems with respectfully expressing their views here at Regis. This goes for all political persuasions.

Regular readers will notice the conservative-leaning columns I publish in seemingly every issue. But rest assured that this isn't because of some "right-wing bias" here; it's because I

choose mostly to publish perspectives pieces, just as others have their favored sections. Anyone can do it, and I strongly encourage more students and faculty to submit articles of their own on just about anything this semester.

Then there's my weekly radio show, *Seng Center*. You can't walk outside between 6 and 8 on Thursday nights without hearing my loud voice blaring across the Quad, discussing politics from a conservative perspective. Moreover, it is the only radio show of its kind on KRCX (and in Colorado), and it streams online as well at krcx.org. Thus, it indirectly but indiscreetly represents Regis.

Easily I could be censored, as happens at many colleges, to present a certain image. I could be denied the show because of some sense for an arbitrary need for greater "balance" on the station or restricted on what topics I can talk about, guests I can bring on to the show, etc.

But to my excitement, I'm not. As long as the things I say and do on the program are appropriate—or, shall we say, "Father Sheeran Approved"—everything's a-okay, lest activities director Dave Law sick Chuck Norris on me. (God have mercy on my soul if that happens!)

Besides, just like with the Highlander, every student has equal opportunity to share their views on subjects ranging from religion to poli-

tics to anything else. When a single complaint came in about my show, I was readily defended by the powers-that-be for that very reason—just as I should have been, under the principles of academic freedom.

When I talk to most people about all this, they rightly reply, "Well, of course. Why shouldn't Regis allow students to speak their mind, irrespective of ideology?"

I can't disagree with that at all: every college campus should be open to such ideas. But when you talk to Republicans at many colleges in America, and to conservative college graduates (who think of CU's leftist ex-professor Ward Churchill), it really does matter a good deal.

To them, Regis is a diamond in the rough—and that's exactly why I think the university deserves much credit for truly standing behind the idea of academic freedom.

No matter what your political persuasion, you're welcome here at Regis. And even more importantly, you're welcome to express those views however you wish, so long as you do so respectfully and with the kind of analytical thought prescribed by a Jesuit education. Let me know if you feel otherwise.

So the next time a certain Jesuit priest asks me, "What evil are you up to today, Jimmy?" my response will be simple. "Nothing you won't allow, Father. And thank God for that!"

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