ACADEMY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Civic Engagement Student Artifact

Preparing to Serve Orphans Abroad

In September of 2005, I took part in a 10-day fast to raise awareness and funds for St. Philip's Mission, an agency that cares for 137 orphans in southern Swaziland. During the fast, those that pledged or expressed their support were sent daily updates on my physical status, stories about the children served at St. Philip's, and photographs of the situation in the country (taken from my time as a volunteer there). Originally, I had expected the fast to act as primarily an educational tool, and to raise a few hundred dollars at best. Instead, over $2300 was raised from the activity. The experience was inspiring.

Following the fast, I compiled all of the photographs, videos and stories from my time working at the St. Philip's mission, and created the SwaziHope presentation in an effort to continue raising awareness and funds for the children at St. Philip's.

Over the next two years, I provided over 40 presentations in communities across Northern and Southern California, as well as in Arizona. Audiences ranged in size from 10 to 1000 individuals, and included groups such as Rotary Clubs, women's guilds, churches, and educational institutions. Two SwaziHope photo exhibits were also hosted in Northern California. The exhibits sparked further interest in the relief effort, and even led to a televised segment on ABC's "Sacramento & Company" in October, 2006.

As I approach my first semester in the International Service program, I am reminded of my work with SwaziHope and of how I want to continue providing that type of service for non-governmental agencies caring for orphans abroad. To assist in that career path, I would like my fieldwork and academic work, among other things, to determine which

types of visual arts and print media are the most effective in raising awareness and funds, internationally and locally, for relief efforts abroad.

While at my service placement, I hope to not only provide useful media resources to an agency (through my skills in photography, video production and print media), but to obtain answers to the following questions for my academic work:

- What media tools are most commonly used in the country's nonprofit sector?
- Which tools are the most effective in obtaining funding from international versus local sources?
- What resources and funding have been received as a result of such tools?
- How can these effective media tools be made accessible to those agencies lacking international exposure?

My goals for this program are three-fold. First, through the program's braiding of theory in the classroom and practical experience at the service placement, I want to move beyond David Kolb's educational stages of concrete experience and reflective observation, towards abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. I am not interested in simply obtaining information at this point in my career. *I want to use it.*

I would also like to advance into the stages of adaptation and integration in Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. As I am pursuing a career that will require regular overseas travel and ethnorelativism, I would like to use this experience (coupled with service experiences of the past) to learn how to better approach international exchanges and enter into them as seamlessly as possible.

Finally, I would like to be able to apply both of my service placements towards my dissertation, and ultimately, apply my degree towards my career. Following the completion of the program, I hope to obtain a position through my service placement in the United Kingdom or with an affiliate office in the United States.

I expect that this program will be difficult and intense. I'm confident in my creative and business writing skills, but do not have as much confidence in my ability to write academic papers well. In that respect, this program will be challenging for me. My patience and flexibility (with regards to new cultural norms) will also be tested as I

move through Michael Paige's Intensity Factors. Specifically, I expect that my age, married status (single), nationality and race may impact (positively and negatively) my status within the Jamaican community and workplace.

These challenges do not discourage me, however. Before I left Swaziland, the children asked me, "Will people see our pictures? Will people know about us?" By offering presentations about Swaziland, by showing footage and photographs of the orphans from St. Philip's, and by telling their stories on their behalf, I felt like I was shouting, "Yes!" to them tens of thousands of miles away.

Over the next year, I want to learn how to bridge the gap between international agencies serving orphan populations and the people that can support their work. By participating in this program, I want to feel like I am shouting, "Yes!" to those causes, agencies, and children that have long since been unnoticed and need to be heard.

Bibliography

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