

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Short Program

Conflict, Human Rights, Peace, and Justice in South Africa



Capstone Portfolio

Amanda Santmyer

Delta State University

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Personal Biography

It has been my dream, as far back as I can remember, to travel to Africa. I can remember my grandfather teaching me the "world game" as a child. He would spin the globe around, and I would put my finger on its surface. When the globe stopped, I would have to name the country, continent, and capital of the place I was touching. He would then tell me fantastic stories of the area I had landed on. His stories of Africa were always exciting and full of adventure. As an adult, I now know that these stories were not his own--they came from books, movies, history, and television-- but, as a child, I didn't know the difference. All I knew was that Africa was exotic, dangerous, and full of life.

Years later--after my grandfather has passed--I began college. I studied geography, American politics and history, human rights, and African history. I concluded that you couldn't understand American history without first understanding African history, as it is African culture that has shaped the American South--specifically Mississippi and Louisiana. Having been born in Louisiana and raised in Mississippi, African history and culture was all around me. Unfortunately, one cannot survive on dreams alone, and my love for African history had to be pushed aside to make way for more profitable areas of study.

Time passed. I finished my Master's in Education, and began teaching in a public school. With the exception of two Hispanic students, all of my students were of African descent. I was shocked to find out how little my students knew of their rich heritage. I did my best to incorporate as much history as possible into my language arts curriculum. I continued teaching history in conjunction with my language curriculum until May 2010, when life threw me a bit of a curve ball. I left my teaching position.

I traveled the continental USA, Mexico, and Canada. I bounced from place to place, doing yoga, rock climbing, and working odd jobs. After 16 months of this nomadic lifestyle, I decided I needed to focus. I needed a career--something I cared about. By pure chance, I ended up in the Delta region of Mississippi. I began assisting at Delta State University, and working towards a Master of Applied Science in Geospatial Information Technologies, with an emphasis on the agricultural and human rights applications of GIS.

It was March of 2012 when I realized that I had yet to study abroad. Since the thesis I was preparing would be done in August, I thought I had missed another chance to travel. Not two full days after having this epiphany, I saw information on the university bulletin board about a study abroad program; the list of possible destinations was separated by continent, and there were only 2 universities under the heading of Africa. I wish I could say there was research involved in my choice, but my mind was made up when I saw Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University as an option.

In my African studies in college, I had become quite the follower of Nelson Mandela. His peaceful, Ghandi-like approach to ignorance and injustice had been my method of handling

issues for some time. He had been a shining light for me--an example of what humanity could accomplish with forgiveness, peace, solidarity, and love for your fellow man, no matter the color, race, religion, or orientation. It is because his name was there, on that flyer, that I decided to make this happen.

I met with a number of people over the next two weeks. I explained my thesis and why it was vital that I attend this program. Thankfully, I was able to convince enough people that this experience would be invaluable to the university, and here I am.

My expectations of the program were not high. I knew I would be completing my thesis while in Port Elizabeth. The NMMU Library and lab would be at my disposal, as I was enrolled in the short program. I hoped for an experience that would show me the beauty of South Africa--this thriving Nation that had overcome an apartheid regime and now can claim ownership of the most progressive constitution in existence. I also wanted to see the healing wounds left over from years of oppression and inequality. To only see the good, or only the bad, would have been a false representation of the Africa I had read and researched on for so long.

South Africa is attempting to make right the wrongs, admit her shortcomings, and remedy her problems, all while the whole world watches. I must say, I "knew" so much about South Africa before I came; now, all I am certain of is how little I actually know and how fragile freedom is.

Tuesday, June 26th

Discovering the Truth of South African History

Speaker: Dr. A. Herbst

Though apartheid ended nearly two decades ago, there is still a obvious gap between the races. Discrimination still exists here, and there is a clear correlation between income and race. One would expect this--there is no quick method to introduce tolerance, equality, and solidarity. One must look closely to witness the slow change to a more progressive society.

In reality, South Africa's progression and growth cannot be measured. Each individual will have had his or her experiences, hardships, successes, and as a result, his or her own "truth" as to the progression or digression of South Africa since the installment of democracy.

There is still a high unemployment rate in the country. HIV and Aids related issues are still very present--especially among the impoverished. Though the constitution ensures each individual has access to the rights ensuring health, dignity, educations, and many more, the government can only support a certain amount of assistance while still maintaining a functional infrastructure.

In short, South Africa is slowly correcting the imbalances of the past, while keeping a watchful eye on what is required to ensure a strong future. No entity can correct South Africa's issues for her; she must rise to the occasion as a nation, or fail as one.

Personal Reflections

Apartheid. Nelson Mandela. FIFA World Cup 2010. These three terms encompass what the majority of Americans know about South Africa. I'm not proud of it. In fact, as someone versed in history, it pains me to admit this. Americans are inherently good, I believe. If you show an image of starving children on television, they will give, give, and give. Unfortunately, that has become the American way--throw enough money at a problem and it will go away.

South Africa has transitioned from an oppressive regime to a democracy. This may sound unimpressive, but the "Arab Spring" nations began this process, and the results have been unfortunate elections, violent protests, and, in some instances, the ingredients for a full scale civil war. South Africa's successes, when compared to others, are unbelievable. One thing is certain both here in South Africa, and across the globe: freedom is fragile; it is a balance that must be preserved ever-so delicately.

Additional Reflections

Immediately following this lecture, we went to have our NMMU student id cards made. Apparently there were a few students waiting when we arrived for our appointment. We were instructed to move to the front of the line, and as we waited, the local students began to spout phrases in English. "It will never end" and "Nothing has changed" were just some of the snippets I could make out. This being my first day on campus, and having done nothing but follow instructions, I wasn't sure how to handle the situation. How do you convince someone that color has nothing to do with the situation? What could I, a pale skinned American, say to convince these students that color wasn't an issue? There was nothing. Unfortunately, color is always an issue when you are in an area, South Africa or Mississippi, that has had inequality due to color. I was speechless.

Thankfully, Mr. Bradley Lewack immediately noticed what had happened. Whereas I felt all I should/could do was stand quietly and look at the floor, Bradley immediately pointed out the situation. He walked right over, between us international students and the NMMU students, and began a dialogue. He smiled as he pointed out how quickly a situation, if left unresolved, could escalate for all the wrong reasons. He explained to us how, in a different time, white students would have been allowed to cut right to the front of a line. He asked the NMMU students if, when we moved past them, they thought it had to do with race. He chatted with them and us until "them" and "us" became "we", as in "we students".

From this experience, I learned a number of vital things. First, pretending that race isn't an issue is silly. In areas with such a history of injustice, race is always a factor in the back of society's mind. Also, no problem has ever been solved in silence when there is more than one party involved. Finally, Never feel guilty for who you are. Yes, I am white. I am American. You may be Black. You may be South African. We are all human. We all have feelings, and we all deserve respect.

In hindsight, I am actually glad that this incident occurred on our first day at NMMU. This encounter set the precedent for the rest of the experience. Had I not witnessed the event, I may never have realized how sensitive people can be when the culture is still transitioning from one acceptable mindset to another. I did not take this incident lightly, but instead applied the knowledge I gained to the rest of my trip, and will continue to use those lessons for the rest of my days.

Kragga Kamma Game Park



Kragga Kamma Game Park was our first introduction to African wildlife (unless you count the monkeys that stalk students at NMMU). The adventure was quite appropriate for a large group of Americans, as the animals were quite tame. As humans, we often forget that the sad, lazy little creatures in our zoos were once wild, instinctive, and unforgiving. Kragga Gamma provides a safe introduction to the true meaning of "wild" animals.

Wednesday, June 27th

Diversity Intervention Workshop

The diversity workshop is a fantastic way to begin our immersion into another culture. It is so easy to spot differences. I remember reading the Sunday paper "funnies" each week, with my grandmother. I was very good at the activities that instructed you to analyze two images to find the ways they are different. If simple Sunday comics can assist in training your brain to search for differences, I can only imagine what advertising and television can subconsciously train us to do.

There were a few times when I was not comfortable. When discussing sexual orientation, age, religion, and politics, I usually stay silent. The ladies in charge of the workshop did an amazing job of providing a welcoming atmosphere for us to share. I felt comfortable sharing things about myself that I have shared with very few people. The atmosphere in the room was such that I was comfortable, if not almost proud, to share my differences.

"Nomalungelo" is the first Xhosa word I learned. It is in the feminine of isiXhosa, and it means "to have rights". One of the kind women in the workshop shared this with us. She gave us a peek into what it means to be Xhosa, as well as what it means to be a citizen of the world. Structured lecture is academically advantageous, but to speak with someone who has an emotional, true experience to share is my preferred method of learning.

isiXhosa Culture and Customs

The amaXhosa plays a large role in understanding the Eastern Cape. A large majority of the population is Xhosa speaking, even though western culture has diluted many aspects of traditional Xhosa customs and culture.

The traditions of specific attire to represent single or married can still be observed, though not to their full standards here in the city, as traditional dress would not be conducive to appropriate work attire.

As capitalism crept into South Africa, men began moving to the mines or cities for money. The men would be gone for extended periods of time, leaving the women to maintain the families on their own. The men may not return, or they may return after being unfaithful to their wives, thus bringing sexually transmitted disease into the villages.

Though many try to cling on to as much culture is possible, western civilization's capitalistic mindset has all but destroyed what was originally a beautiful harmony between a people and the land that sustained them.

Thursday, June 28th

South Africa's Current Political Landscape

Lecturer: Dr. J. Steyn-Kotze

The transition from an oppressive regime to a democracy is not a smooth one. As we see in northern Africa and parts of the Middle East, transitions are typically messy. South Africa faces immediate challenges regarding reconciliation, inequality, and poverty. The first democratic administration of South Africa had a number of sensitive and pressing issues to address after the birth of this new democracy.

Nelson Mandela's administration needed to set the precedent for what would follow. South Africa belonged to all the people equally, regardless of the superficial stipulations of the past regime. In order to begin the democracy with a tabula rasa, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee was formed. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as any other soul who cared to listen, heard stories of atrocities and hatred. This method of healing the nation with dialogue and narrative, instead of vengeance, was the first step to closing wounds that had been open for too long.

Whereas Mandela was the peacemaker, Thabo Mbeki was the economist. Economic reconstruction and recovery became the forefront of his initiative. Corruption and nepotism were still major problems for the government, and unemployment and poverty were on the rise. Health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, were rampant and continued to increase. Poverty stricken areas were greatly affected. When one must choose between a lewd act to prevent starvation today, versus the chance of developing illness in 10 years, there is very little question as to what one would decide. Mbeki's failure to deliver to the capacity that was expected limited him to one term as president.

President Zuma's term has been plagued with indiscretions. Service delivery has been a hot topic in regards to the major failures the current government has had. Many of the rights promised in the constitution have yet to be delivered; these failures are still constitutionally sound since the government must only meet these rights as it has the resources to do so. Zuma has also been criticized for his sexual indiscretions, his unapologetic stance for his criminal rape case, and his lack of education. One can assume the current secrecy bill has more to do with protecting political figures' dirty secrets than serving the people.

Personal Reflections

Apartheid oppressed the majority of the population in South Africa. Those who suffered physical and emotional harm are not the only victims. Unfortunately, South Africa is the greatest victim of all. With apartheid still very fresh in the public's mind, trusting anyone not associated with the ANC is borderline blasphemy. This places respected black male ANC members in the best spot for attaining power in the current government.

Apartheid produced a large, inadequately educated black population; the result of this is a large pool of inexperienced, poorly educated leaders. Mandela was lucky enough to have been educated before his imprisonment, but what about others? Zuma was merely twenty when he was made a political prisoner. The emotional affects of imprisonment alone are enough to break a strong spirit. When you combine this with little to no education beyond primary school, you end up with strong people in leadership positions, but they lack the skills required to lead effectively.

Red Location Museum

Personal Reflections

I had studied quite a bit of material regarding apartheid, but I was not prepared for this. Mr. Bradly Lewack was able to recount personal experiences in dealing with his own emotions, as well as those of many names and faces displayed in the museum. To hear him speak of his teacher, who was killed, was heartbreaking. When he recalled his experience with the woman singing in the recording, it took every ounce of strength to prevent tears. There are moments in life where you cannot find the words to describe the myriad of emotions you are experiencing... this was one of those times.

After the museum, the mama's shared with us some of their stories. To see the emotion of pain, confusion, and sadness come through those mamas' faces is not something I will soon forget. I kept thinking of the Mississippi Delta, where I am from, and how there are still those harboring emotions such as this. I was emotionally exhausted from the experience. I cannot imagine what it must have been like, and still be like to hold those stories in your mind. It is phenomenal that these women are able to continue on. I wish the whole world were as resilient and kind as those Mamas.

Saturday, June 30th

Monkeyland, Birds of Eden, and Tsitsikamma



Sunday, July 1st

Seaview Lion Park



Various members from a number of the NMMU short programs gathered together for a weekend of exploration and adventure at a number of fantastic venues. I am glad we visited the monkeys and birds right away, as they were still considered cute (once they begin waking you at all hours of the night or stealing your food/possessions, the "adorable" factor drops dramatically).

Our adventures to Monkeyland and Birds of Eden placed us in the enclosures of beautiful birds, cheeky monkeys, and one very cool ape named Atlas. Though walking through a forested area of primates is exciting, having monkey poop land on your head is most certainly not.

We completed the canopy tour at Tsitsikamma, while learning a little more about the forest ecology. Some of the trees we were in exceeded 600 years in age; these trees were growing before Columbus landed in the new world.

We completed the weekend at Seaview Lion Park, where many of us were able to enter the animal enclosures and snuggle with baby lions, tigers, hyenas, caracals, and leopards. This was certainly one of the highlights of my adventures here in South Africa. After this experience, visiting a zoo in the USA seems rather dull and anti-climactic.

Monday, July 2nd

Human Rights in South Africa

Lecturer: Mrs. Lindi Coetzee

Street Law is a South Africa NGO focused on educating the population. The cycle of violence in domestic partnerships is physically and emotionally exhausting to endure. In many family based societies, such as you see here in the Eastern Cape, it is difficult to separate the abuser and the victim. These relationships are based on hope by the victim and power by the abuser.

Many people are wary to come to the aid of the abused person for that reason. If you offer your assistance, you will consciously or unconsciously begin to develop distaste for the abuser (this is a logical reaction). Once the victim returns to her abuser, there is a strain on how to deal with occasions where you must interact with this abuser. Soon, the friend will remove him/herself from the dynamic, as continuing to cultivate that relationship presents ethical and moral issues.

Personal Reflection

When thinking of human rights, I think of any number of topics. I must say, domestic violence was not one of those topics. I was slightly saddened by this fact because domestic violence is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations. I don't know many refugees and can't imagine what it feels like to be oppressed, but I know multiple people who have been in violent situations. When thinking about human rights, one doesn't need to cross oceans. Human rights violations occur in your very own communities regularly.

I was also disturbed to hear about the plight of persons within the GLBT community. I had never heard of corrective rape. I actually thought, as South Africa is the only African country that does not punish GLTB community members with jail time, or, in some cases, a death sentence.

I felt this lecture could be adapted and used in any area of the globe. Many of our topics were specific to South Africa, but some issues are found on every occupied continent on the globe.

Tuesday, July 3rd

Conflict Theory

Lecturer: Dr. L. Snodgrass

The term conflict has a very negative connotation. Contrarily, conflict or disagreement is the catalyst for change, improvement, and growth. To be human and interact with others is to be in conflict. The meeting of ideas and resulting resolution is both conflict and growth.

Conflict is not the issue, as we have all had to deal with it as some juncture of our lives. The problem is actually agreeing to a resolution that benefits, as best as possible, both sides. Changing a policy is easy, but changing a mind is quite difficult as it requires parties to take responsibility for shortcomings.

There is no single way to approach conflict; each instance must be viewed in context with many subjective ideas, theories, and thoughts. The important thing is to find the best method for resolution without stepping on the rights of those involved.

Personal Reflections

Conflict is not a negative word unless you place it in negative context. This is one of the most difficult things to convey to the masses. Yes, some of the darkest blemishes on humanity were a result of conflict, but we do ourselves a disservice to think that conflict must always be bad. If no one ever challenged your thoughts, would you ever question them? If you believe yourself to know something, and someone challenges you with an alternate theory, do you react as an elitist—as if you can't be wrong? Do you give in instantly, and alter your entire perception? Most people would ponder, reflect, research, and decide. It is this method that produces growth.

I pick my battles. If I know my colleague is an expert on a subject, I do not challenge his idea; I research my own to discover the truth as best I know how. These philosophical pondering moments have given birth to the most fantastic theories and inventions, sciences and arts. To believe for one second that the catalyst for growth and creativity is a bad thing is to do oneself a grave injustice, because you will remain stagnant. You will never flourish.

Tuesday, July 3rd (continued)

Truth and Reconciliation

Lecturer: Prof. A. Govindjee

Truth and reconciliation committees are found in a number of places in the world today, but the original blueprint for this method of resolution was created in South Africa. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was introduced as a way to put an end to the revenge seeking mindset that many oppressed people were battling at the end of apartheid. Violence leads to violence, so the TRC was put in place to be the stopping point for endless retaliation.

The TRC was an organized forum for victims and accusers to come forth, speak their accusations or crimes, and be absolved of those instances. If the crimes were a result of the apartheid regime, absolution would be granted; however, if the crimes were a result of personal vendetta or personal gain, the accused must answer for those crimes through the normal channels.

Over one million cases were heard in ten years' time, and 70% of those cases were resolved in 30 days or less. No entity had attempted something of this nature, so its success was unprecedented.

Personal Reflections

The TRC may have seemed as if persons were getting away with horrible crimes, but in the wake of forming a new democracy, forgiveness was the only way to handle these violations. The entire country uniting in a mass act of forgiveness is an astonishing way to begin a new era. I am almost certain that if this had been attempted anywhere else in the world, it would have been met with extreme opposition.

The ability for this to not only be attempted, but successful is a miracle. The success of the TRC is one of the few instances where the spirit of ubuntu is clearly seen in South Africa. The term has been thrown around loosely since my introduction to the word and its meaning. I had begun to think that it was a ghost term—people spoke of it, but I didn't see it. The stories of the TRC and its successes restored my disappearing faith in humanity.

Wednesday, July 4th through Friday, July 6th

Grahamstown National Arts Festival

I must admit, I did not enjoy the festival in Grahamstown overall. The cultural aspect of the encounter was nice, but there was no one to place these things in context, so the relevance slipped by. I attempted to see a number of shows, but so many sold out quickly, and my attempts were in vain.

The redeeming factor was when a friend and I skipped out of the festival. We ventured into the town, speaking with people and vendors. We made it up to the museum at the top of the hill, and explored a few hole-in-the-wall spots.

I was disappointed because of my expectations. I had hoped to see culture, but not Western Culture... I feel as if Western culture has contaminated everything unique and beautiful about certain parts of Africa.

Saturday, July 7th through Sunday, July 8th

The adventure to the farm was interesting. I was raised on a farm, so I didn't get too excited of the farm activities—it just felt like being home and working. The first day, the only redeeming factor was the conversation I had with Manus Wentzel (Sp?) regarding the political state of South Africa.

Unfortunately, my group did not stay with Winnie and Manus; instead, we were moved to another farm. Whereas the Wentzel's felt like home, this house made me feel as if I were in the way. The atmosphere was uptight. We shot guns and did farm activities—again, as I would have at home. The domestic workers would not speak to me; in fact, I couldn't get one of those ladies to make eye contact. This was a bit odd for me, and added to my discomfort.

Conclusion

In hindsight, I loved visiting with Winnie and Manus, as they are kind and welcoming. I couldn't help but feel that the five days spent shopping and farming were not relevant at all to the coursework I was expecting. I would have traded those five days for five minutes on Robben Island.

Monday, July 9th

Policy and Decision Making

Lecturer: Ms. E. Draai

Policy and decision making in South Africa is reaching a level of distress that could be devastating if not handled correctly. The younger generation appears to be politically apathetic, while the older generation is focused on the hierarchy of needs—food, clothing, and shelter outweigh concern for the political state.

Many of the issues faced in South Africa today are not issues found only here. Non-taxable illegal immigrants being paid under the table are affecting economies worldwide. Banking issues are vital to a stable economy, and failure to handle these issues can result in massive debt. For example: the USA's bailout system, which is using socialist methods to correct issues in a capitalistic society.

South Africa has a number of issues awaiting resolve. HIV/AIDS education and prevention are a major factor in the economy. The epidemic results in child-led households, extended medical stays, and pre-mature death among the working-age population. This issue is also directly related to the need for universal healthcare and improvement in the public health system.

Refugees entering the country are also an issue, as some feel these immigrants are taking jobs from the tax-paying citizens. This results in violence and xenophobia among the public, especially those who feel directly threatened by these asylum seekers.

South Africa's constitution delivers every right to the people, but unless policy makers educate themselves and take action, the constitution of South Africa is nothing more than a pipe dream on paper.

Personal Reflection

I was thankful to have gained some insight into the issues faced when attempting to implement the rights afforded by the constitution. The party in power currently is disadvantaged by the reality that the education, if any, acquired by these gentlemen was dangerously sub-standard, though through no fault of their own. I cannot begin to derive how to correct, or even handle, this dilemma. My hope for South Africa is that she is able to withstand these tests of democracy, and come out stronger as a result. This can only happen if the upcoming leaders of the younger generation take interest and realize that the issue is not one for their parents to resolve, it is one for them.

Monday, July 9th (continued)

Leadership in the African Context

Lecturer: Ms. R. Wallace

As it is currently, if nations continue to feed off the resources of other nations, we will not be able to sustain our existence as we know it. We are all interdependent of each other and without cooperation on all fronts to work together we will surely fail.

The pre-colonial South Africa had the right idea. They existed in harmony with the land, and could only flourish while maintaining this homeostasis with the land. Capitalism and transportation have allowed areas to hold large populations by acquiring resources externally. In fact, this need for exterior resources is what drove the British to begin colonizing in the first place.

Western culture is predominantly capitalistic, which is clearly not a long-sustainable way to function. The economic issues facing the USA, and thus, the whole world, are a shining example of the faults of capitalism.

The Scandinavian lands thrive quite well, but their size aids them in this. Sweden and Norway have a declining population, caused from parents having only one child, and some choosing to have no children at all. China and the east are experiencing some of the same successes, but at the sacrifice of many human rights afforded by South Africa as well as the western world.

Personal Reflections

The interconnected nature associated with the notion of Ubuntu is one sure way to transition back to sustainable living. The problem is this: South Africa must not only succeed, but thrive while maintaining this mentality in order for the rest of the world to consider sacrificing their sovereignty to form a single, cohesive unit of humanity. The idea that African leadership methods from the past are the best bet for a sustainable future for our world is great, but until South Africa can show the rest of the continent and world that this method works, nothing will change.

Tuesday, July 10th

Film: Between Joyce and Remembrance

Synopsis: The film follows the family of a young man abused and poisoned by the regime for his activism regarding apartheid. The struggle of the family to learn the fate of their son and the resulting hardships of a life without him are depicted by personal accounts from his mother, father, and children. The parties responsible received amnesty through the Truth and Reconciliation committee. The accused sought forgiveness from the family, but too much time had passed for the family, and they refused his apology. In the end, the family buries the hair of the young man, which had been kept from his hospitalization due to thallium poisoning.

Personal Reflection

The story that unfolded in the documentary was heart wrenching, but not uncommon. So many families experienced great loss, and never had closure. Wounds such as these can infect a person, causing them to be jaded. This can be seen in the family's inability to forgive the accused, as well as the son's violent outburst that resulted in the accused being injured.

It was beneficial for most to have a face to associate with the atrocities. As humans, it is easy to shrug off an issue if we cannot humanize the issue. It is for this reason television stations in the USA are flooded with images of emaciated children and abused animals. The same can be said for war and violence. If we can humanize an issue, we grab the conscious of people, thus resulting in an emotional response.

Human Trafficking

Lecturer: Mr. J. Preller

Human trafficking has become one of the most detested, and yet most common issues facing our world. Victims are lured by promises of a better life, and often voluntarily travel to the area of entrapment. There are more people suffering from this form of slavery than there were slaves in America prior to the civil war. This modern day slavery can include forced labor, prostitution, servitude, and human organ harvesting.

Personal Reflection

The number of victims worldwide is astounding. I appreciate being made aware of the rising issue, but I would like to know what avenues to take in an effort to end/prevent abductions and resulting atrocities. Also, what are governing bodies and world security such as Interpol doing to end these issues? This topic should be brought to the forefront of issues faced globally.

Wednesday, July 11th

Negotiation, Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration

Lecturer: Dr. L. Snodgrass

Most institutions function also as conflict management systems. Our society's development is measured by the institutions and strategies we have implemented for dealing with conflicts. Conflict, if handled well, will result in a meeting of the minds between individuals and groups. Various methods of resolving conflict can be implemented as well.

Negotiation presents an opportunity for parties involved in conciliation—or non-invasive initial communication—to reach a mutually beneficial decision. Mediation allows a 3rd party to assist in these negotiations. Similarly, arbitration involves a 3rd party, but allows the 3rd party to have the final decision.

Regardless of the method used, resolution is about addressing the interest and needs of the involved parties. Negotiation is often made competitive; however, good mediators will transform this competitive atmosphere into one of problem solving.

Personal Reflections

The terms discussed in the lecture are terms I am quite familiar with. Instead of reviewing these terms and their definitions, I would have much rather seen examples of each of these methods from resolution-based cases occurring here, in South Africa. The terms are just words if presented in definition form rather than as example from South Africa's history, which would likely evoke some emotion.

The redeeming factor of having to listen to this lecture and its dry, generic terminology was that Dr. Snodgrass has the ability to make anything seem interesting, even judicial terminology that has no relevant context in regard to our program.

Thursday, July 12th through Sunday, July 15th

Private Adventure to Cape Town

Six of the Short program students, including myself, chose to venture to Cape Town for the weekend. The drive was pleasant, as we were able to see the beauty and majesty of South Africa along the coastal area. We arrived late at night, so our adventures in Cape Town did not begin until Friday morning.

Our first venture out of our lodge was to Table Mountain. Due to inclement weather, we were unable to venture to the top of the mountain (this same weather prevented us from traveling to Robben Island as well). We did arrive at the base, and were able to view the city from above while looking out to the waterfront. Cape Town has the most visually pleasing skyline of any city I have ever been to. It is phenomenal.

Next we ventured to Boulder Beach. There were penguins and other wildlife along the path we walked. The beach itself was immaculate. Every picture I snapped looked as if it were professionally done, and could easily pass as fancy desktop backgrounds for a computer. We grabbed lunch at the marina, and headed back to the city center for the evening.

We completed our Friday with a walk down Long Street and dinner at Mama Africa. The food was exotic, but not very well prepared. The redeeming factor was the live music for the evening. Since my arrival in Africa, I have only heard Western music playing. It was so refreshing to hear local performers' live, original music. We made certain to get a copy of the album before we retired for the night.

Saturday began with a trip to the waterfront. Our group split—one section choosing to shop and the other visiting the aquarium. I cannot speak for the retail facilities, but the aquarium was so much fun. We were able to see sharks, which was nice since diving with great white sharks was no longer an option—again, due to weather.

In the evening, many of the ladies visited a vineyard and participated in a wine tasting. I chose to continue my explorations of Cape Town instead. The diversity of Cape Town was fantastic, and I began to believe that these people had moved beyond the tensions still being faced in other areas of South Africa. This was not the case at all. Apparently, we had chosen to stay in a middle class area, where the diversity was abundant. Upon one of my fellow student's trip to a very fashion forward mall, she experienced quite a bit of ignorance from the local people. My conclusion, after learning of this, was that no area of the world is free of bias and prejudice. Some voice it, others hide it, but it is always present in some form.

Monday, July 16th

Post-Conflict Recovery

Lecturer: Mr. S. Heleta

Post-conflict recovery is not the proper title for the topics discussed; post-war recovery describes the situation more appropriately. War is defined as a state of open, armed, often prolonged conflict carried on between nations, states, or parties. Whereas war can have a beginning and an end, conflict of some form is a permanent fixture in our world. Therefore, the transition from the apartheid regime to democracy and the recovery that follows will be referred to as post-war recovery.

South Africa was faced with many challenges in creating and stabilizing a new democracy. There is manual on how to successfully recover from a war-like state. The newly formed government had to address numerous issues, including the use of violence, improving and maintaining infrastructure, funding these improvements, and finding the qualified persons to oversee these issues. In short, the aim of peace building in post-war South Africa is to create a stable environment after the large-scale conflict.

The key to success for South Africa was to transition from destructive relationships, which the apartheid regime had based its power on, to constructive relationships, where the population unites for a common goal, such as to better the community and nation. It is easy to change a policy, but it is extremely difficult to change the mindset of the people. South Africa has had a history of reacting violently or destructively to make a point. For example, if the public transport was failing the lower class, some individuals may see fit to destroy public property, such as burning a functioning bus. When the inequality was such that those displaying the violent habits were not allowed to use these modes of transport, destroying the property made a valid point—if we are not allowed this amenity, then you shall not have it either. This form of anarchy is not effective when the entire population uses the same transport. Destroying public transport in this instance creates more hardship for the entire population, not just the party the anarchist is intending to disable.

Ending a state of war or fighting creates peace, but is a negative peace. The fighting has ended, but the healing has not begun. The goal of South Africa is to maintain a positive peace—this occurs with economic, social, and political improvements. Successful post-war recovery must then be a product of the community, and must be led by those who have the most knowledge on the conflict—those who have experienced it. External sources cannot come into a broken nation with no understanding of the issues that the population faced. In order for South Africa to rise from the ashes of a fallen apartheid regime, the nation had to unite and heal from the inside out.

Personal Reflections

Mr. Heleta did a fantastic job of conveying how delicate the situation in South Africa truly is. I believe most Americans, including those of us who had been here for weeks, were still blind to the fragile nature of the issues South Africa must face. For some reason—possibly naïveté—we had in our minds that apartheid ended and everyone lived happily ever after.

Many stereotypes contribute to the ignorance Americans have regarding the implementation of democratic ideals. Our own democratic ideals have been in place for over 200 years; we cannot pretend to know how difficult it must have been to make this dream of equality and democracy a reality. The attacks of September 11, 2001 created a very misguided notion in the states that many people from these regions are fundamentalist (though this is obviously not the case). Due to this skewed image of the Middle East and her population, many attributed the struggle to transition to democracy to ignorance, an uncivilized mindset, and other far more ridiculous notions.

As we learned more about the extremely difficult and delicate manner that democracy must be preserved in, I gained a new, more accurate perspective of the struggles facing the people of the Middle East and Northern Africa in the aftermath of the “Arab Spring” revolutions.

This lecture was informative, with regards to South Africa’s current situation; however, I was able to understand—through dialogue with Mr. Heleta—so much more about the struggles in Northern Africa, the shatter belt of Eastern Europe and Russia, the struggles of East Timor, and various other hardships faced by countries that I had never considered before. The lecture was intended to reflect post-war recovery in South Africa, but resulted in a world history and political theory lesson that I will not soon forget.

Tuesday, July 17th

Addo Elephant Reserve & Schotia Game Drive



Addo Elephant Park and Scotia Game reserve will definitely go down as a highlight of the trip. It was thrilling to see these fantastic creatures in their natural state of being. The interaction of the lions and elephants at Scotia was one of the most thrilling moments I have ever experienced. It was truly something worthy of a National Geographic special.

We were lucky enough to have Mr. Bradly Lewack with us for these adventures. I cannot convey what an invaluable asset to NMMU he is. His broad knowledge of South Africa, her biomes, people, and culture have made the simplest things exciting. His genuine care and compassion comes through in every story he tells, and he is able to approach delicate issues with such grace that his compassion actually becomes contagious.

Wednesday, July 18th

Madiba Day

I have enjoyed every moment spent in this great nation. The term "ubuntu" is thrown around haphazardly at times. I had heard the word and seen it plastered on armbands and newspapers. It was not until this day, Nelson Mandela's birthday, which I truly felt exactly what ubuntu means. On this day, a few of us travelled to Missionvale for our 67 minutes of service. Having just experienced torrential rain, the township was muddy. Areas had flooded; homes were destroyed. And yet, everyone celebrated.

I randomly drew "painting window panes" as my service of the day. I trekked through mud to a little wood working area. Instead of windowpanes, I was put in charge of painting names onto wooden post. The post had something to do with a soup kitchen, I believe. If someone brought in an item to be recycled, he or she would earn a free cup of soup. I am no artist. In fact, I try to avoid putting my handwriting on anything, as I was--and still am--embarrassed by my sloppy script. But, the kind woman leading us decided I "looked artistic", whatever that means, and I was handed a paintbrush. I kept thinking, "you're going to wish someone else had done this."

I was handed a list of names, and instructed to paint the names onto wood, so it could be mounted on a post. As I looked at the names--most of which appeared androgynous to me--I decided I'd just have to give it a shot. I did my best to make the paint even. I tried to make it look nice. I made sure not to misspell anything. I dotted my I's and crossed my T's as best I could. I started to accept that perhaps it wasn't the most beautifully scripted letters, but the fact that I was there, at that moment, completing that task, with no expectation at all of personal gain, is what ubuntu was all about. Not me, but we.

Once the painting was over, a newly made friend and I walked over to two elderly men plowing a garden. The garden was small, and the men were fragile. All of the plowing was done by hand. The men had been working the same tiny patched of land for 13 years. When they had first started their project, all water had to be brought in by hand. They sell the produce to the local people when it is time to harvest. Though the prices are much higher than what one would pay at a commercial grocer, the end price is still cheaper than what it would cost to be transported to a commercial grocer to make the purchase.

These men worked hard to provide a service to their community. The work is hard, and the pay is almost non-existent, but they are happy to provide this service to better the community. That is the meaning of ubuntu. It is that strong will to serve one another that will carry these people in the townships through whatever life can challenge them with.

Madiba Day



Final Reflection and Assessment

This past month has been the single most adventurous and emotional time of my life, thus far. To see the successes and failures of South Africa in her journey to maintain the most progressive outline of democracy ever created is almost too much to take in. There are still areas that need much improvement, but in the people truly embrace ubuntu, as they claim to, then South Africa has the potential to be the best and strongest democracy ever formed.

I do wish the program had skipped the farm and art festival, and used that time for something more close to the area that the program was intended to focus. This is my only real complaint.

In the Mississippi Delta, race still plays a large role in the community. The town I am in now is completely self-segregated. I originally thought I would come to NMMU, find a method to stimulate the integration of this small town, and return with answers. Instead, I have seen how fragile issues can be, and how delicately issues of race must be handled. A new constitution or law requiring the end of prejudice is a fine theory, but this is not how the human mind works. We are instinctive in our desire to be better, or the best. Unfortunately, this is not a trait that can be turned off. It has to be bred out of us. The change must start at home and in the community. There is no quick fix to any issue, but I am honored to have witnessed, if only for a month, a nation trying her best to move past our instincts and focus on forgiveness and human dignity.

Best wishes to you, South Africa. I am your #1 fan, and hope against all odds that you can be a shining example of what can be accomplished when we commit to change for the better.