



Spring 2015 Newsletter



Real Change

Real Change is an award-winning weekly newspaper that provides immediate employment opportunity and takes action for economic, social, and racial justice.



Over the course of a few trips to the U-District on a search for Real Change vendors, I discovered things that may not be what the average Seattleite would think I would have found. There, in front of the University Book Store, I met Stanley. Stanley sells “Real Change” newspapers, and has been doing so for about four years now. This newspaper has brought him comfort, which he has not experienced in a long time. It has given him the ability to pay rent, as long as he meets his monthly quota. The well spoken man expressed to us how he had to sell 600 newspapers a month, or else his spot would be taken and he would be out of a job. Stanly however, did not seem comfortable with us asking questions, and kept persisting we call the office if we had any questions, we did not want to pester the gentleman any longer.

Seeing and meeting this person has made me think about how such little things can impact one’s life. It made me think about how big of an impact “Roots” is on the community. “Roots” is a young adult shelter where they take in about 40 people every night and serve them dinner and breakfast. Over the summer, I started volunteering there cooking breakfast. Since I love to cook, it came naturally. The very first day, the staff were shocked by my presence: an 18 year old boy making French toast for the homeless in the basement of a church.

I being 18, male, with a shelter above my head, knowing how lovely it is when someone else prepares your breakfast; even if just a cup of Joe. I thought about doing this because of what a warm plentiful breakfast could do for someone who has to live on the streets, in constant fear if someone is going to steal their shoe, hat, or blanket.

I cooked with what I had. If there were eggs, I’d make something out of them, maybe I’d add a little paprika to them, just for a kick, the residents loved it. If there weren’t any eggs, there weren’t any eggs. I would scavenge around the kitchen, combining oats and grinding up nuts, making porridges of sorts. If there was stale bread, I would make French toast, only if there were eggs of course. If there were potatoes I’d make home fries and ground sausage to it, if there was some; all the food came by donation.

Witnessing the expressions that the residents had after eating the food I prepared as they brought their dishes to the counter made it all worth it. They were happy they had a full belly, I was happy to cook and be able to do *good* with my skill. This organization made me think about the small things. How when my girlfriend makes me waffles in the mornings on Sundays, and how I make oddly paired ingredients into a scramble on Sundays, and how a little heat amino acids and glucose molecules can make someone’s day so much better.

– Gabe Collins

Attending a high school that is near-uniform in terms of political, racial, and socioeconomic makeup, there is certainly a sense of comfort and security that stems from such conformity, there is an undeniable sense of claustrophobia and monotony that a lack of contradiction fosters.

In such an environment, contention must be sought out, and so, after fourteen years of merely passing by Margaret on my way in and out of the grocery store, I approached her and introduced myself. I had previously acknowledged her presence only with a fleeting smile, and perhaps had bought the newspapers she distributed on a rare occasion. I knew nothing of her except that she was once homeless, yet, with the certainty that accompanies a familiar face, I entered into that first conversation with the ease of an old acquaintance.

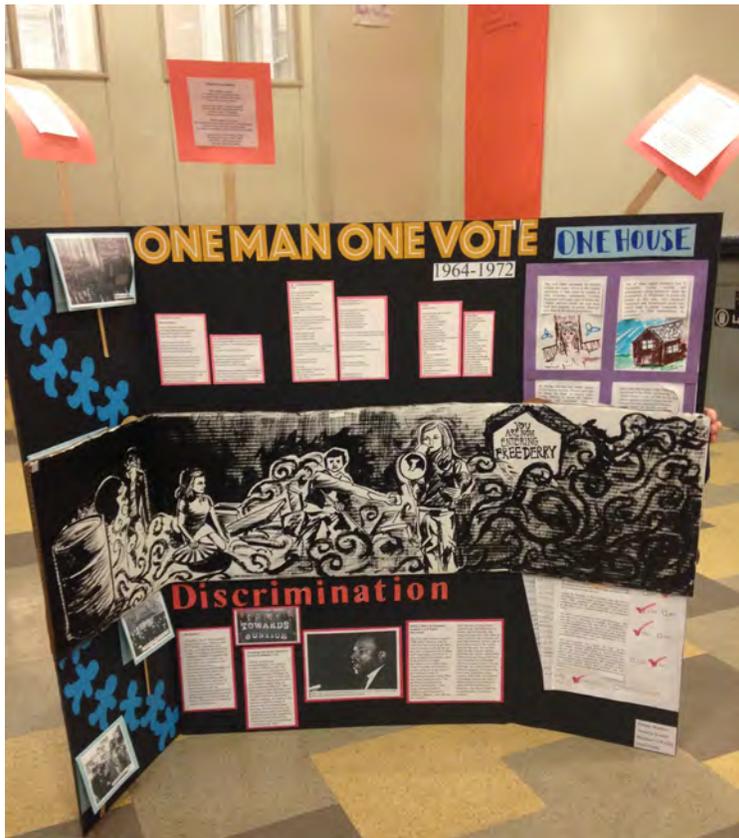
In a soft-spoken manner that carried within it a worldliness, she spoke eloquently on a warmth that was being displaced by an increasing focus on materialism and individualism. She asked me how I observed the world and whether or not I felt communion with a higher power when I was attuned to my surroundings. The ambiguity of each question allowed the dialogue to meander with a deliberation that invited introspection. Our visits seemed to coincide with major developments - the South African visitation, the Marysville-Pilchuck shooting, discussions of the Bosnian and Brazilian education systems - and she often genuinely sought out my opinions on these, not content to hear a regurgitation of someone else’s thoughts.

I was struck by a conversation with such substance, a far cry from the affirmations of sentiments that I was used to. With each subsequent trip back, I am grateful that she has provided me with a platform to flesh out ideas, to challenge, and to defend. Ours is a mutual respect, one founded out of the need to nurture a dialogue often lost in a busy world. – Mia Vanderwilt

South Africa and Northern Ireland Projects

In addition to reading books and class discussions, we were given the task of creating presentations to learn more about South Africa and Northern Ireland. Within smaller groups, our class covered different themes and topics relating to the conflicts situations of both Northern Ireland and South Africa. In groups of four we read, researched, wrote, and reflected on what we learned by creating an artistic poster to depict our information. We presented to our peers, and wrote poetry about the different topics. We spent approximately two weeks researching each of our countries before we put the posters together. Once completed, we presented to small groups from within our class as well as other Hands for a Bridge teachers. Many of us were intrigued by the statistics and history we learned, sparking our interest and excitement for the upcoming trips.

These projects were very helpful in building our understanding of the conflicts in the countries we would soon be traveling to. We learned about the history of the countries of our imminent friends, and understood complex concepts that have built the societies of both Northern Ireland and South Africa. It was helpful to research and put together a presentation of our own small part, and then come together and learn from our peers about how each aspect of history and society comes together to build their present nations. We found that learning information from our peers is definitely one of the best ways to learn and understand something, and we all appreciated our resulting knowledge! – Allyse Sullivan, Ayelet Basson



South African Visitation

For me, and the rest of the class, the South African visitation was one of the most amazing experiences of Hands for a Bridge. I was lucky enough to be able to host a student, Tanya, from Bellville. The experience hosting Tanya was a very eye-opening one. She explained to my family what it's like to life in South Africa, whether it was from the music she had us listen to, the food she helped cook, or the history that she taught us. It was very special to learn about South Africa from a student who is from there rather than from a textbook. Another part of the South African visitation that was really special was the retreat. From working on an art project, to performing a poem together, to having an open mic, to talking and laughing during all of our meals, the class and the South African visitors became much closer. After the retreat, HFB felt more like a community than just a language arts class. It was amazing to be able to have the privilege of connecting with students from oceans away. This was an experience that none of us will ever forget. – Ella Baumgarten



The first day Roosevelt, Isiliamela, and Bellville students were all in our Hands for a Bridge period together set an inspiring tone for the rest of the South African visit. As we walked into the theatre being greeted with open hugs, we were filled with nerves and curiosity. We wondered what our new guests would think of us and if it would be easy for all us to get along. We immediately jumped into the traditional HFB songs and circle games, rhythm and voice flowing effortlessly from the South African students as they patiently and encouragingly showed us what to do. There was obvious hesitation among some of us, including me, from having to jump into circles or try and dance with everyone watching, yet we were only met with astounding kindness and friendliness. Just within spending that first hour with the South Africans the community and bond strengthened for everyone involved. I had never before been a part of an environment that broke the ice and gelled so quickly, thanks to all the wonderful hearts involved in HFB. No matter how hard one may try, the songs and chants will be stuck in your head for a while. So it was a good thing we continued to play these games throughout the week, and they constantly brought smiles and laughter to people's faces. It was also on that day that we broke up into small groups for the first time and began to get to know the South Africans on a deeper personal level. I remember being surprised at how easy it was to create conversation and to connect with one another. As a result, I left this day feeling very excited and thankful to be spending the week to come with our new friends. – Sarah Kaestle

When the South African students came to Seattle, it was one of the most special experiences I have ever had in my life. As an introverted person, being able to meet so many people who are outgoing and unafraid made me see the beauty in getting to know someone I wouldn't have before. The 10 days that they were here flew by so fast, yet seemed so long. By the end of their stay, all of us became a big family. In the short time that they were here, we laughed together, cried together, shared secrets with each other and overcame challenges with each other. There wasn't one thing that made the visitation more special than another, but it was all those little things added together that made the experience fuller and richer. Without the whole week's experience before the retreat, we would have not felt comfortable sharing ourselves with each other, and without the retreat, we would not have known how we as a group functioned and fit together like puzzle pieces. Over the week, everyone singing together gave the songs we sang meaning and memories. Right before their departure, it was us singing Shosholozza around the school that brought tears to my eyes, the musical voices of everyone together - it didn't matter if you were a good singer or not - and the hands and elbows that linked everyone together symbolically showed how we became inseparable, and the close bonds that we have built up



The visitation by the South African students was really the catalyst for us students at Roosevelt. One of the focal points for the entire visitation, though it occurred near the very end of our visitors' stay, was the retreat. Heading over to Warm Beach, the class had no idea what would occur at this retreat; we'd only been in the class for a handful of weeks, and none of us were extremely close to one another. By the end of that weekend however, that took a change of the best. Going through multiple sessions of journal writing, being enclosed in an environment that facilitated connection and conversation, and participating in activities that really allowed us to put away insecurities and self doubt, allowed all of us Hands for a Bridge members to really accept one another and break down barriers that we once built high. Two activities during the retreat really accomplished this feat; the mask dances, and the open mic. The mask dances made us create a small, four-piece dance that we would have to teach other individuals, and also learn one another's dances as well, which we would have to teach to other people. Learning other people's dances and teaching them to others really helped break the ice between all of us, and created a fun environment to be a part of. The second event that really stuck out to me was the open mic. While people shared songs of their own, and pieces of spoken and physical art, some brave individuals took the stage to really show the group a part of them that had not been witnessed before. These instances really helped the group see deeper into one another's hearts, and fostered the beginnings of a community that would soon grow to make us become inseparable. That weekend was the real beginning of Hands for a Bridge for many of us, and has created one of the most thoughtful, caring, and accepting group of kids that I have ever witnessed. – Justin Pederson



A major appeal for people applying to Hands for a Bridge is the traveling to either South Africa or Northern Ireland, but people forget that South African kids also get to come here. When the South Africans visited it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Over the course of a week we got to meet these complete strangers, have them stay in our homes, and we did an endless amount of activities. The crazy thing is that in this short amount of time we all became so bonded to the South African travelers that I saw them, and still see them, as my brothers and sisters. We spent mornings together, going to school and meeting up with the other travelers. Then getting back together for lunch where we spread out among the tables, filled with random Roosevelt Students where we chatted and shared stories, creating an atmosphere that I haven't seen before at Roosevelt. Every day after school we gathered and played games, wrote in our journals, and sang songs. In the evenings we got together for dinner parties, movie nights, and sporting events. Not only did us Roosevelt kids bond with these South African travelers, and in many cases, creating life long connections, we bonded with each other. At the beginning of the year we knew that we were HFB, but we didn't know what that meant or what that entailed, and when the South Africans came and sadly left, we realized that being HFB is being family. – Max Sleeth



Seattle High School Visitations

Cleveland High School

During our visitation with the South African students we had the opportunity to visit six different high schools around Seattle. I had the chance to visit Cleveland High School with various students from both Seattle and South Africa. Upon arriving to Cleveland we were greeted by a small group of eager students who then proceeded to give us a tour of their school. We learned about their school and what seemed to be its vastly different curriculum. After our tour we were able to sit in on a math class. I got to see the class dynamic of a different high school, something I had rarely thought about. It was very interesting experience that opened my eyes to the inner workings of Cleveland High School. During our visit we were unable to have conversations about the Hands for a Bridge program, which is unfortunate, yet the experience was still extremely rewarding. It was important for us to see and visit other schools around Seattle to deepen our understandings of the city and the problems that plague it. – Grace Strandoo

Chief Sealth High School

Upon arriving to Chief Sealth you could tell it was a very diverse high school, not only because of the vast diversity of races, but also because of how the students interacted with each other. They all seemed to respect each other, and while I only saw the surface layer, they all had many questions for the South Africans and were very interested in what they had to say. Also, all the South African visitors were very interested in what Chief Sealth students had to say. Compared to Roosevelt, Chief Sealth is much bigger and they seem like a school that could benefit greatly from a program like Hand for a Bridge. Throughout the conversation, the South Africans were able to get the Chief Sealth students to open up and share more. Everyone, including me was intrigued, and it was very lively conversation because of that. Overall I left Chief Sealth with a better understanding of the word diverse and how powerful it really can be. – Ruby Hale

Rainier Beach High School

During the high school visitation, we were fortunate enough to visit Rainier Beach with the company of our visitors from South Africa. We felt so welcomed and we were greeted with open arms. This opportunity was very eye opening for all of us. Our tour guides were such a great example of the students at Rainier Beach. They showed a tremendous amount of leadership and were very eager to take us around and show us their school and all of the different classes they attend. We were fascinated to see all the different programs Rainier Beach had to offer, such as the Engineering classes, aerospace classes, cooking classes, and many more!

Walking the halls of the school, and eating lunch in the cafeteria felt very different from our school, but we were welcomed once again with warm smiles and friendly conversations, and free pizza!

One moment that stood out to us was when we attended the last class of our day. We talked about how we as people, tend to judge others based on different stereotypes. We found it very interesting when we did this activity. Each of us wrote on a notecard what you thought of the person sitting next to you based on preconceptions. That activity was a catalyst for new conversations that lead to talking about more stereotypes in our society, not just between our schools and how we use our schools to identify someone rather than getting to know them. When we came back into our group discussion, it was very interesting to hear about what other people had talked about. We found that in some ways, our conversations about stereotypes led to misconceptions between the two schools. Some of the stereotypes were proven to be true, while others were not. We were so lucky to have been apart of this discussion that led to many eye opening conversations.

Our South African students were really appreciative that they got to have the experience they did, and we were too. – Jackson Simone, Makayla Beleford, Taylor Johnson

Poetry

From the very first day of Hands for a Bridge, Mr. Nolet had a message for us: “Assume the attitude of the poet.” With this favorite catchphrase, he meant for us to apply poetic concepts and intention to all of our writing, and as we moved through everyday life as well.

To be honest, it was a completely confusing direction at first. Accomplishing this goal required each of us to answer the question of what a poet is, and what sort of attitude separates a poet from other kinds of writers. As we start to move through our poetry unit, it's become clearer than ever to me that everyone finds a different answer to the question of poetry.

Personally, I've always liked reading poems - recently I've started to like writing them too. I like searching for the right words, the ones that landed with force and precision on a reader. To me, poetry is finding the language of a feeling: sharp words that bite in rage, or floating phrases that sing like love. It's a challenge, because so much of what's going on inside our heads is buried in subconscious. I like trying to look past the curtain, and I like writing down what I see.

A couple days ago, when we were starting our group poetry readings in class, someone found the following quote by the Lebanese poet Adonis: “A poet is a guard who understands the rhythm of this world. He travels with history and feels the rhythm of history.” It's a quote that seems to sum up the attitude of the poet quite well.

– Karinna Gerhardt

I am a Product

I am a product of everyone I have ever met
Each person has had an impact on me
From how I perceived their feelings towards me
From the way they shook my hand
To the way they said goodbye.
Because each person
Has helped shape me
As if they were an expert glass blower
Into what I am today
And will change me into what I will be tomorrow.
I am a product of everything I have seen
Each thing I see has had an impact on me
From a homeless man living in the bed of a truck
From a high schooler driving a Mercedes
To a teacher trying to inspire students
Because what I've seen
Has helped shape me
As if it was an expert glass blower
Into what I am today
And will change me what I will be tomorrow
I am a product of my family
Each of them have had an impact on me
From my dad teaching me to throw a baseball
From my mom teaching me how to do addition
To my brother teaching me to hold my own
Because each person
Has helped shape me
As if they were an expert glass blower
Into what I am today
And will change me into what I am tomorrow
I am a product of my family of friends
Each person I've grown up with has had an impact on me
From Clay telling me I was everyone's little brother, including his
From Ryan teaching me by example how to persevere
To Natalie teaching me how to be everyone's best friend
Because each person
Has helped shape me
As if they were an expert glass blower
Into what I am today

Content

Every note that collectively rose,
Each snap, siding off fingers and plucked twang of string
Stayed for a moment,
Hovering.
Underneath we swayed,
Cemented in time
Held in place by squished bodies
Full stomachs.
A sense of belonging in a room
That less than two weeks before
We'd been strangers to.
Now it was home, in a way
Home to the open arms we'd race to find
Home to spontaneous song and
Hips bumping together
Home, because we filled it with our voices
And we were content.
- Elizabeth Cox



A Toast to Poetry

I first met poetry back in Elementary school
a time when words were so fresh they still had that new car smell
at the time poetry seemed like something lame
I wanted recess and sports and hot wheels
I didn't want poetry

flash forward to my high school experience
and poetry turned into the girl next door
All of a sudden she wafted into my life
only this time the smell was not that of a new car
this time it was justice and freedom and expression

this time I learned of all poetry could offer
I learned of the power of words being plunked into place in a steady beat
synchronizing with the hearts of the audience
I learned of the emotion seeping out of one's mouth
so much so that those listening begin to drown
I learned that poetry is the voice to convey what resonates deep down
in the cobwebbed depths of one's soul

Most of all I learned that poetry is to everyone
what peanut butter is to jelly
it has our backs

Poetry you are my North Star,
guiding me through the night on my crusade of free expression
Poetry you helped me through some of my toughest times
when my heart went and got broke in two
man, poetry it was you.
It was you who guided me through
when I got left out to dry
man, poetry you came in so fly
So fly and you brought me up to the sky
when darkness came and strangled my might
man, poetry you gave me the fight
Gave me the fight so I could see the light

I ignored you poetry
and so I'd like to thank you
for taking me by the collar and slapping me in the face

To never being rendered speechless
To always standing up for what you believe in
To expressing your deepest and truest emotions
To you Poetry
To you

- Porter Jones

The Mural

Our mural was drawn to represent the time we spent in Northern Ireland. Flanking either side of the base of the poster there are two flags one for Britain and one for Northern Ireland. We wanted to show what we learned about the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. Between these two flags that are two trees one still whose leaves are still green another whose leaves have turn burnt orange in the autumn. In Northern Ireland orange and green both have links to the troubles as green is a symbol for catholic resistance while orange is a symbol for Protestantism as William of Orange was an important protestant figure. Between these two trees there is a quote, "default to kindness", which resonated with all of us on the trip. In the middle there is the Peace Bridge which crosses the river Foyle. The protestant and catholic communities were separated by the river Foyle and the peace bridge aimed to bring these two communities together. The orange life ring on the bridge represents the work done by Foyle Search and Rescue where volunteers donate hundreds of hours preventing youth suicide. On the right there are Buttercups which symbolize the remembrance of those that died during the Ohma bombings. On the left there is the Oakgrove College crest which is the school where the HFB NI chapter is located. On the top of the mural there is barbed wire showing that the poster is in fact one giant wall like the ones in Northern Ireland erected to protect communities from violence but also stops reconciliation. – Nathaniel Swedberg



Northern Ireland Trip Reflections

There wasn't a single moment during this trip that wasn't amazing; everything was well organized and meaningful. I was really impacted by seeing and learning about the other side of the world. There were just so many new things that I had never experienced before, such as crossing the rope bridge, "Carrick-a-rede," located at the Antrim Coast. If the group wasn't there with me, I would have run away instead of taking a brave step and facing my fears. Even though I was screaming loudly while trying to cross the rope bridge, I could hear my wonderful classmates' encouragements, which helped me keep going. Also, when we left Derry and started to stay as a group, I was really touched by the care and love I received from everyone. I personally didn't get homesick at all when I was in Derry, probably because we had an extremely busy schedule and everyone was really excited to see other HFB members from the other side of the world. When we got to Portstewart, I got really sick and missed my bed crazily. But all of a sudden, one of my lovely classmates, Emma, gave me a really big hug and gave me the look of, "I got you girl." I was really touched by this little action. My day totally changed because of this hug and it made me feel as bright as if the sun would never go down again. The level of our friendship impressed me. I felt that I got to know each individual better and have learned about myself better from others.



I am really grateful and thankful that I have spent the most amazing trip I have ever been on with all these wonderful people. If any single one of them wasn't there, then the trip wouldn't be complete. Everyone played a key role on this trip; everyone has adds their own color that made the trip shine. I wanted to say, **I really do love you all to the sun.** – Chih-I Liu

My two weeks in Northern Ireland is something that will be stick with me for a lifetime. Leaving for the trip, I wasn't really sure of the impact it would have on me. But I never knew that it would be as impactful as it was. One of the things about the trip that I cherish is the immense amount of knowledge I gained. Having a long conflict of trouble based upon hundreds of years of religious divide, Northern Ireland is a brave place that continues to struggle with peace. It was truly an amazing opportunity to talk with various people who have either been a part of the conflict or was just a bystander. It really put my life into perspective, to see how I lived in a bubble, here in Seattle. And to never know about how it is to live in an area that is uneasy. But what I saw was that Northern Ireland and all who inhabit it, are a big uniting force of love and peace.



My time with the students at Oakgrove Integrated College is a other big part of the trip that hold a special place in my heart. I never knew how much love and kindness people could have. Welcoming us with warm (amongst the cold weather) arms, the first week of the trip was a time that I got learn and grow as a person and students with the help of everyone around me. Not once did I feel homesick during the trip because the people who surrounded me were my family, Roosevelt and Oakgrove. The trip was a great learning experience, that when I left, I had a wider view on issues in my community especially at school. It also gave me a chance to meet and get to know people that I thought I would never come in contact with in my lifetime. It really gives me the push to strive and make a difference in my life with the people I meet, and the issues I face. I can't even imagine what it would be like if I

“It is not what one says or does that you remember, but how they make you feel.” It was at some point during our time in Derry/Londonderry that somebody brought up this quote. I don’t remember who said it, when, or for what reason, but it stuck with me and, by the end of our week with the Oakgrove Hands for a Bridge family, I was already coming to understand how true this quote is.

I was unsure of what to expect before meeting the other students, and mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness abounded throughout the long day of travel, especially during the seemingly endless and final bus ride from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry. But quickly after meeting our hosts at school and then joining up with the rest of the group in front of the Guild Hall in the city center for games, the smiles, laughter and bonding that spread throughout was only a quick glimpse of that

which would easily come during our week in Derry/Londonderry. Even as early as the workshops we participated in on Sunday and Monday, it felt as if the Oakgrove students were friends we had known for years, not ones we had met the previous day, and ones with whom we could tell the silly jokes, or the share personal thoughts and feelings.

It wasn’t however, just the students themselves who were the ones that made it special, but others such as Mr Harkin and the homestay families that accepted us and truly made us feel at home. I asked around during the week about how the homestays were for other Roosevelt students, and was almost always met with positive responses about the caring or comfort that made us easily feel welcome in this new place. Whether it was about how adorable their younger host brother was, the amazing meals, or how extraordinarily kind and hospitable the host mother was, I feel that though limited by our busy schedules, having this homestay opportunity and the time we spent at home was a very important aspect of the trip for all of us, and I know it certainly was for me. Unfortunately, our time with the Oakgrove students in Derry/Londonderry could only last one short week, but I can say with confidence that it was one of the best and fastest weeks of my life. By the end of the week, tears were flowing as the two sides hugged and struggled to part ways. But even in the last few hours, there were those smiles and laughter I had gotten used to being around. There were times during the week when I was tired or feeling very negative, but even so, there were those who always made it so that I went to bed happy and looking forward to tomorrow, and the connections I made with the people who can do that for me are the kind of bonds that I’ve truly enjoyed making in my Hands for a Bridge experience, and why the people I was able to meet have made this trip worth so much to me. In the end, I may not remember much about the conversations we shared, but to the Oakgrove students I can only say “thank you,” for the way they made me feel is what I will truly treasure for a long time to come. — Nicholas Navin

14 days in the grand scheme of a human life doesn't seem like a very significant amount of time. You could commit to almost anything for 14 days if you tried hard enough. Before venturing out on this adventure, I made a promise to myself to stay as open and accepting as possible, to sponge the most out of Northern Ireland that I could. Over the course of two weeks, I stuck to my promise and had some of the most eye-opening experiences of my life. We did a lot of cool things and the activities, discussions and setting only added to the magical experience. However, the part that influenced me most was the people. The Northern Irish are a tough, withered but bright folk who encapsulate resilience. Every person, young or old, wealthy or poor, a leader or a listener showed me the emotional and intellectual diversity that is Northern Ireland.

Mr. Harkin is by far one of the most inspirational people I’ve ever met and brought out the best in every person on this trip. He possesses a light that takes everyone with him rather than stifling everyone in the shadows. Together, we became one HFB group and I became close with so many people. It is a privilege to have had this experience and to be



South Africa Trip Reflections

The two weeks I spent in South Africa were, hands down, some of the happiest moments of my life. We learned about *ubuntu* before we went to South Africa, but I didn't grasp the true concept of the word until I was washed over with the kindness and happiness that the people in South Africa exude. The moment we stepped off the plane, we were serenaded with a loud round of Shosholozza, and our suitcases were taken out of our hands at once by people eager to help. This warm behavior trailed us everywhere we went for the next two weeks.

Throughout the trip, we would have meetings with the three schools where Mr. Nolet's constant mantra was "switch-on". This meant we had to make sure that students from the different schools were interacting, instead of reverting back into their safe, familiar groups. I observed the relationships between the two schools growing even stronger during the course of that trip, and I am confident this will continue for the rest of the year.

The Roosevelt students I travelled with were amazing people who I grew very close with during the trip. We will always share those two weeks of unforgettable memories - whether it's walking barefoot along a sandy beach, singing nervously together in front of hundreds of people, self-translating Arabic soap operas while cramped in a small hotel room in Dubai, or looking out the airplane window, teary-eyed, as the Cape Town skyline shrinks into the landscape.

Being around so many positive people made the return to Seattle hard, as it made me realize that here, we live our lives much more separately. Walking down the street with my Mama in Langa, everyone seemed to know each other. Complete strangers would greet me with a smile or a wave. Compare this to Roosevelt, where we too often stare at the ground or at our phones, even if there is an opportunity to say hello to someone we know. Since I've returned, I have tried to retain the positive energy that I learned from the people there. I would never have anticipated the impact this trip would have on me. But if you ask me now, I would write all the letters, wash all the cars, and procure all the auction items in the world, if it would take me back to South Africa. – Menaka Narayanan

Being faced with the question "what was your favorite part about South Africa?" has been very difficult. There is an infinite amount of moments over the two weeks that could be categorized as my favorite. From the greetings at the airport that were full of song and cheers, to the church service in Gugulethu, to having long talks with my mama in Langa, to listening to the beautiful languages of Afrikaans and Xhosa, or going up Table Mountain with the Roosevelt students and singing and dancing with everyone. Looking back on it now, some of the parts that I remember the clearest were the hardest parts. While listening to Nolet's phrase "switch-on", us Roosevelt students tried to bring the Isilimela and Bellville students together. While it was hard, I realize the amazing work that was done. In trying to unite these two cultures, our connections with each other increased. The moments are endless, both fun and challenging, but every memory that I think of surrounded the unforgettable and unbreakable bonds that I created with the people in South Africa. I will never forget how quickly we connected with each and every person. We became a family, and the sense of community that encircled us the entire time made me realize that this is something I should try to bring back to Seattle. Whether it is in the way I meet new people or understanding old friends, the importance of community and the feelings I felt in South Africa



I want to try and put the pure bliss I experienced during my trip to South Africa into these short words but that would be impossible. Everyone that was with me knew that I was confused, confused because I was so happy and I couldn't find anything to bring me down. I was so happy that I was worried something was wrong with me and I tried to find something, anything to get me grounded again. This was due to a combination of things; the group of Roosevelt students I got to travel with are some of the most humble and down to earth people I have ever met. Each of which I feel a connection with that I know I will never lose. The chaperones and teachers were unbelievably supportive and understanding throughout the entirety of the trip.

Now those two elements were just as important in making this trip the experience it was as anything else. However, being in South Africa also helped a little bit. That place is unbelievable, the hardships you see can make your stomach drop and bring tears to your eyes. But living through these hardships are the most amazing people, people who find the joy in everything and look at each day as a new experience. The optimism and passion they had every day was infectious and inspired every single one of us. I bonded with people that I will always remember and will have in my heart forever. I came into this trip with little faith that I would come close to bonding or really making true friends with anyone from South Africa. I don't think I have ever been more wrong, leaving South Africa was one of the hardest moments in my life. The way I connected with so many of these people and the way that they touched me I will never want to nor be able to forget. I still have letters I have not read because each time I open a new one tears come to my eyes. – Henry Whitmarsh



Arriving into Cape Town I don't think it's possible to list every single emotion that I was feeling. I could feel the excitement in my smile and the nerves within each beat of my heart, but once I saw the mixture of familiar and new faces in the airport the rush of feeling everything at once went away. Being in South Africa felt as if it was just a well remembered dream and I wish that I had never woken up from it. Visiting there was more than an incredible experience and it's doubtful that there's enough memory on my computer to write out every unforgettable moment that happened while staying in both Langa and Belleville.

One out of million, a memory that sticks out to me every time I think of South Africa were the questions that my host brother Lwanado would ask me. Things I've never thought about, things I didn't want to think about, things that made me think harder than I do in my math class, and things that I could tell were touchy for the both of us. The relationship that I built with him was unlike any person that is currently in my life, and it was built upon immediate trust and curiosity of "the other side's" view. He made me look at all the things I chose to ignore a little differently, and for that I hope to go back and visit him for more of



HANDS FOR



a BRIDGE