

Academics

BY CADET ROBYN GRATIC



When I got on the plane in Atlanta to begin a semester study abroad in South Africa, it was a very foggy, dreary day. It symbolized what I was leaving behind to embark on my journey to a better, more enlightened me. Getting off a 15-hour flight to one of the most beautiful skies I've ever seen was the first sign of good things to come during my stay in South Africa. In the days after I arrived, the sky would continue to inspire me in many different ways. The first couple of weeks the sun welcomed me with strong, powerful rays that left me without a doubt that I was in Africa.

This is my first experience in another country, and I never imagined it would be just that, another culture, not American, not even close to being American. We're safe watching different cultures on television but moving to Africa for a semester is an awakening. America may be diverse, but it seems that everyone has something in common with someone else. As an American in Africa, even as an African-American in Africa, there is nothing similar about me and the next person except that we both live on the planet Earth. It seems shocking to interact with people who have no knowledge of your history, politics, beliefs or value systems. And I have no clue about theirs. But it is this lack of knowledge that brings us together in cultural exchange.

