

Final Lumos Report for S-CAPE
Madison Barefield
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I have spent three months trying to process the impact that this experience has, and continues to have on me. The recurring themes are hope and Ubuntu. Since returning back to the States I have tried to find ways to feeling as fully alive as I did at S-CAPE and experiencing the tangible love, the kind of love that brings tears to your eyes because you feel so intertwined with the other that you realize all their suffering and thriving, pain and joy, hope and fear is entangled with yours as well. I knew that I loved South Africa and the work of S-CAPE since I had been there before, however I did not want to go into this experience with expectations or comparing it to my previous time there. I was honestly very nervous to return because I knew how different it would be, and then it felt like everything was going wrong with my visa and with the drought in Cape Town, but the moment I landed on the tarmac at Cape Town International Airport I started bawling because I knew I was exactly where I was supposed to be. It was five months of falling more in love with the country, the people and my work there.



My project itself did look a bit different than I had planned, which did not come as a huge surprise, given my previous experience not only at S-CAPE, but at working with non profits here and abroad. Flexibility and adaptability are key and those were definitely qualities I had to embody. The main tenants of my project were social enterprise development and grant writing, along with assisting in administrative work, fundraising, and daily operating duties at the safe house. My dream is to have S-CAPE run like Thistle Farms, and I met with one of the ladies on the global team at Thistle Farms before I left to see what kinds of products they may be looking for if we were to become a partner. She gave me a couple ideas, one being African jewelry, which got the wheels turning! Upon my arrival, I learned that S-CAPE had received a large donation of old costume jewelry that the women were fixing, rebranding and reselling at



At the market selling jewelry

local markets. They really enjoyed this project and so I built upon that by also teaching them entrepreneurial skills such as budgeting, branding, marketing, pricing, simple bookkeeping and how to set up business emails and apply for markets on their own, as well as teaching the women how to make organic chap stick to sell at the markets (which you can make for a low cost and markup). For several reasons I learned that creating our own jewelry may not be the most practical or beneficial at this time. First of all, I wanted to take into

consideration each of our residents goals. One of our residents was a nurse and wanted to return to that profession, one of our other residents wanted to own a bakery in her home community and was on her way of transitioning into that, our other two residents were only there for a short period of time, and one had plans of going to university when she returned home and the other wanted to be a school teacher. Thus, I realized that training the women in entrepreneurial skills, and really life skills, would be more useful for the time being, especially since three of the four residents were on their way transitioning out of S-CAPE and we were unsure as to when new residents would be brought to us. S-CAPE was also very short staffed when I was there, thus allowing me to wear many different hats, but also confirming the idea that even if I had the time to start implementing larger scale social enterprise other than the micro business the women were participating in, the project may fall to the wayside as other daily, pertinent tasks appear by the tenfold. However, since I am returning as a long-term volunteer, I can use what I learned from this experience, as well as have the benefit of more time to undertake this dream and vision for S-CAPE.



Making lip balm to sell at the markets!

The grant writing piece of my project went very well and I am pleased with the grant I wrote. I found a wonderful foundation I am very hopeful about and I have been in contact with them. I submitted the grant to them before I left Cape Town, however the foundation is undergoing some changes and asked for me to resubmit the grant in October, of which I am gladly going to do. I also was able to train the part time fundraiser at S-CAPE on grant writing so that she can continue the process researching and applying for other grants while I am away. I was also able to leave S-CAPE with a list of good potential funding sources I found during my research at the Center for Non Profit Management here in Nashville.

Other smaller aspects of my project included admin work and assisting in fundraising. Regarding admin work, I was able to complete the project partnership portfolio for S-CAPE which is a requirement from the Department of Social Development (DSD) where we get 60% of our funding from. I also updated the volunteer pack for future volunteers and wrote the quarterly newsletter. I completed other admin tasks like taking minutes at our meetings and filing those (another requirement from DSD), making extra keys for the safe house, and writing/editing sponsorship letters. I assisted the fundraiser in planning our annual Ladies

Breakfast by securing sponsorships, getting materials for the goody bags, helping with logistics and sending out invites/posting on social media.

The part of my project that looked much different than I anticipated, but turned out to be my favorite aspect of my time at S-CAPE was the amount of time I spent at the safe house and with the residents. I learned to drive while over there and that allowed me to help with a lot of the safe house duties I had never done before. I did the weekly grocery shopping for the safe house (which was a good opportunity to teach the residents how to find the best deals at grocery stores and budget for groceries when they live on their own), I also took the residents to their appointments at the clinic, to therapy, to Home Affairs, on outings and to volunteer at a local kids program. I became very close with the women and it was the hours I spent driving and waiting with them in the long queues at government offices that taught me the most. It was those moments that gave me immense amounts of hope, for instance, how empowering it was for the women to get their ID documents back that had been taken from them when they were trafficked.



Horse therapy!

Or the way they interacted with the children at the kids program they volunteered at and for two hours they got to give back to the community not as survivors of human trafficking, but just as women who wanted to serve. Watching the residents sell their jewelry at local markets was one of the most hope filled activities I have ever witnessed. Their excitement was tangible, it was like Christmas Eve as they got all their supplies together and figured out what they were going to wear. At the market the way they interacted with the customers was incredible, again not as survivors of human trafficking but as business

women. They would help each other, and give each other tips on what worked and what didn't work. I mainly just sat there in awe of what hope and love can do.

The common denominator in all of our residents is hope. In the darkest and most horrible of moments, they knew there had to be more than this, there had to be a way out. And they fought hard. And during the healing process, they hold onto that anchor of hope. When the trauma seems too much, or the nightmares too painful, they hold onto the hope that they will get through this and they will go home.

The residents also loved to teach me things. They gave me Xhosa lessons, taught me how to buy and cook meat (my vegetarian self did not enjoy that too much), they showed me the ins and outs of public transport, and most importantly, how to carry pain and joy simultaneously.



Pigcasso the painting pig outing



At the clinic!

I had the wonderful opportunity to learn from the local community in Cape Town in many different ways, but I think perhaps the most impactful, and one of the highlights of my trip was attending a workshop on nonviolence and contemplative actions put on by a local non-profit. There were justice leaders, clergy, students, neighbors and foreigners (like myself). We got into circles of 7, and were encouraged to be with people different than us, different skin color, different age, different gender, different socioeconomic class, etc. It was incredible and uncomfortable and challenging but mostly enlightening. We mainly discussed nonviolence in relation to fighting racism, and it was voices of the oppressed that were heard. I was able to ask questions but I mainly listened as mothers, teens, students and friends got up to share their experience and struggle of being black in a post-apartheid South Africa that is still riddled with conscious and unconscious racism in individuals and systems. At the end of the night the group of 100 of us gathered in a large circle and sang Senzeni Na, which is a Xhosa song that translates to “What have we done.” As it was explained to me, this anti-apartheid song was sung at funeral processions, demonstrations and at church. The lyrics translate too

“What have we done?

Our sin is that we are black?

Our sin is the truth

They are killing us

Let Africa return”

As we sang this song I couldn't help but weep. This is Ubuntu. I am so deeply intertwined with the pain and suffering of the strangers in this room, and until we are all free, none of us are free. Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu as “a person who is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. Sharing what they have. It is to say that my humanity is inextricably bound up in yours. We belong in a bundle of life.” It is difficult for Westerners, especially American's whose values are so deeply individualistic, to understand Ubuntu. It is what Martin Luther King called the “inescapable network of mutuality...whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” And the beautiful thing about South Africa, in the black communities, Ubuntu is a way of life. I asked one of the residents at S-CAPE who is Xhosa to define Ubuntu for me and she paused for a minute and finally said, “it is humanity.” Ubuntu is the way they see the world, not I but We. Viewing the world from this lens changes everything. It changed how I viewed justice, how I viewed my work, how I viewed my relationships and encounters with friends and strangers. It has made me a more compassionate person, more empathetic, more humble, more passionate. I had learned about Ubuntu, read about Ubuntu, wrote papers on Ubuntu, but it was not until that moment in the circle singing Senzeni Na and weeping did I fully understand what it meant to live with Ubuntu.

I cannot thank the Lumos Foundation enough for this opportunity. It was nothing short of life altering. In fact, so life altering that I am returning for a third time to volunteer at S-CAPE, this time for two years. I feel so passionate about this organization and this country and I cannot wait to return and continue working with S-CAPE in seeking restoration from exploitation for survivors of human trafficking.



The S-CAPE team at our fundraiser!



Muizenberg!