

# Ubuntu

ProjectsAbroad™



*Human Rights Volunteers in downtown Cape Town marching for Gay/Lesbian Rights and the end of violent hate crimes*

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# Member of Staff Visit

## Andy Fryer



We would like to extend a warm welcome to Andy Fryer, a staff member from the UK, who has been working for Projects Abroad in Ghana for the past couple months and will be assisting us here in South Africa for a few weeks! Welcome to Cape Town Andy, we hope you enjoy your stay here with us!

# Women's Day

## 9th of August 2009



**The 9th of August marks the celebration of Women's Day in South Africa. The public holiday is celebrated in remembrance of the Women's March to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, in protest at the apartheid government's "pass" system. 20,000 women from all different races and cultural backgrounds came together to demonstrate against the pass laws imposed, singing the famous freedom song "Wathint' abafazi, wathit imbokodo, uza kufa!" In English "[When] you strike the women, you strike a rock, you will be crushed [you will die!]" This Women's Day, all South Africans will remember how much women in this country contributed to the struggle for freedom and the sacrifices they made in order to push for political and social rights during the apartheid era.**



## Projects Abroad Human Rights Office Update

By Volunteer Owen Hind



A brilliant and productive month for the Human Rights Office which has seen some great work done across all projects. The work done by the July volunteers has been built upon and those staying longer than a month have been vital to giving the office direction and a positive work ethic, which such an important project requires. The good work has been able to continue despite numerous set backs due to the train and minibus strikes.

Although there has been continuous good work within the Cape Town communities, two projects have stood out in showing how much good work this office really does. Firstly, the protest march on Friday 7th in support of the murdered woman Zoliswa Milonga, an open homosexual, saw upwards of threehundred people gather in central Cape Town to march to the High Court. A good turn out from the Human Rights Office, with everyone proudly wearing their t-shirts, boosted the numbers and noise levels. Many thanks to Cynthia Chen for organising it and we will be hoping that the case is moved from Khayelitsha local court to ensure a fair hearing.



Secondly, a special trip was made to Youngsfield refugee camp on Saturday 16th to equip them with desperately needed solar lights. This will mean that the occupants finally have artificial light within the living tents. This wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the perseverance of Isabelle, Teresina and Charlotte among others who have been at Youngsfield every week, ensuring that the refugees know there is somebody somewhere who cares about them.

## Projects Abroad Human Rights Office Update

Following on from good work at Youngsfield, volunteers have been contributing to all areas that the Human Rights office is working on with workshops going on in Bonnytoun House (a juvenile detention facility) and Lavender Hill Township. The recent swine flu outbreak has prevented more regular trips to Bonnytoun. However the workshops focusing on prisoner and children rights have been well structured and have received positive feedback. The office is currently working on an HIV/Aids workshop to be presented in Lavender Hill tomorrow, with Sarah and Greg taking the reigns.

Working more independently, Grace has taken steps to contact Baby Safe which is an anonymous baby drop off centre. She believes she can contribute positively towards this project and Greg is doing his best to mend the basketball hoops at Bonnytoun. These are projects that will no doubt be greatly appreciated once completed.



Jack has conducted some positive research on customary law and is going to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to discuss the problems between local traditional councils and European style governance. We continue to offer advice and aid to anyone who comes into the office, with consultations daily on topics ranging from refugee status to helping with university applications.

The office also benefited from the second intake of Two Week Specials. Their enthusiasm and desire to get stuck in was commendable and showed maturity beyond their years in dividing the R5000 donation from Projects Abroad between Youngsfield and Hillwood school (located within the township). The photo above shows the Human Rights volunteers getting busy and dirty planting a community garden at Hillwood Primary. The purpose of the garden is to allow the community to be self sustainable for food and to be able to have fresh, nutritious vegetables for the local families - as many of the children at the Primary school are lacking in nutrients such as vitamins and minerals.

Finally, Chris has had an exciting morning offering legal aid to a defendant at Wynberg magistrate's court. Although unable to represent the woman officially, at least now she is no longer entirely defenceless.

# Projects Abroad Human Rights Office Update

## March for Zoliswa Nkonyana

Written by: Hannah Fearnly

Zoliswa Nkonyana was murdered on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2006 in Khayelitsha. The only reason for this crime was the fact that she was openly homosexual.

Nine men were arrested on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2006 with the trial beginning in December of the same year. Since that day there have been twenty one court appearances with the majority involving postponements for such reasons as late arrival, absence of defence attorneys, or even failure to attend as was the case of one particular defendant.



It was only in December 2008 that the main witness was able to testify and once again another postponement has meant that she is yet to be cross-examined.



On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August a march was organized by the Western Cape End Hate Alliance and the Cape Town based Triangle Project. Protesters walked from Grand Parade to the Cape High Court and concluded the day with a programme at St George's Cathedral.

The aim of the day was to raise awareness of the case of Zoliswa Nkonyana and pressure the government to transfer the case from the Khayelitsha Magistrates Court to the Cape High Court, which would hopefully ensure a swifter trial. The march was also to raise general awareness of the plight of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people within



South Africa. It was part of the broader 07-07-07 End Hate Campaign which works for the many victims of hate crimes, including all those attacked and murdered on the basis of their sexuality.



Projects Abroad once again showed its commitment and enthusiasm to addressing human rights violations by turning up in their numbers to march for Zoliswa. One volunteer also worked closely with the Triangle Project to help organise the day in the weeks leading up to the march.

The Projects Abroad Human Rights Office will continue to track the progress of this case. We hope the march has assisted in drawing attention to the Human Rights violation and to the delayed procedures, and that justice will soon be realized for Zoliswa Nkonyana.

## Lavender Hill Concert - Eleanor Lonsdale



A special thank you to Eleanor Lonsdale for her fantastic concert with children from the Lavender Hill community! We had a great crowd of support from teachers, family members and Projects Abroad volunteers. The evening was filled with songs, dancing and positive energy - something the children will never forget. Thank you to Eleanor for her hard work and dedication to making this concert possible!

# Volunteer Stories

*Written by: Courtney Casper, Teaching volunteer at Faiview Primary*

It is the middle of winter here in Cape Town. The days are warm and the nights are cold. The city is full of energy, bustling with the sounds of cars and minibuses, music, shouting, barking, laughter, echoes, and footsteps. Giant mountains surround the city, majestically towering over the people, breaking the wide and wild sky overhead.

Over the past two weeks, I have fallen in love with this country—its landscape, its people, its corruption, its unity. It is nothing like Andover. Actually, it is nothing I could have ever even imagined.

The atmosphere at the heart of Cape Town is similar to that of any big cities in the States, such as Boston or Denver. Commercialism is abundant, skyscrapers and beautifully-designed office buildings crowd the streets, lights and neon signs brighten the evening, and a certain level of overall style saturates the area. But just outside of the city, the third-world colors of South Africa truly shine.

Driving down the highway, I see shanties overlapping each other for miles on either side, built out of cardboard, tin, trash, bed springs, wire, and rope. My gaze lingers on young children kicking up dust, running around tires, and playing soccer barefoot with large bottles. I watch their older brothers and sisters pace along the roadside with their thumbs up, hoping for a ride that won't come for hours if it even comes at all. I see mothers with hopelessness and exhaustion etched across their faces. They trudge through the grass on their feet, worn and caked with mud. I watch them, clutching round-faced infants wrapped in long cloths close to their breasts. This is the hand they have been dealt. This is the life their young ones will unfortunately grow to lead. What other choice do they have? They are stuck in the same merciless cycle one finds in every other third-world country, with no means of escape. Without money, there can be no education. Without education, employment is out of the question. And without some kind of job, they find themselves back at square one.

This dark and ever-present reality was part of what inspired me to teach English to first graders in Cape Town this summer. After months of fundraising, working part-time, babysitting, and pulling my hair out, I was placed at Fairview Primary School through an international program called Projects Abroad. Fairview is a wonderful public school located in Grassy Park which strives towards a proper and thorough education for each and every student. But for every teacher, there are usually about forty children, with minimal classroom resources. I am assisting almost one hundred children in total, working on sentence building and structure, reading, and writing. Each class makes time for storytelling and recreation each day in order to keep the children's minds open and stimulated. In addition, music and song are highly integral parts of each child's education, as they allow children to learn all kinds of concepts and values in a playful and interactive way.

Fairview Primary School was constructed during apartheid in the year 1975. During this period of extreme segregation and discrimination against nonwhites, Grassy Park had been a primarily colored area. The school itself was a pre-fabricated building, only meant to last for about 10-15 years. Now, 35 years later, the building still stands, although it is slowly falling apart. The walls are extremely thin—only 28 millimeters thick—almost guaranteeing poor teaching conditions for both the winter and summer months. (continued on page 9)

# Volunteer Stories

The sports field which is used by around one thousand children each day was replaced ten years ago for R100 000, but is now a field of dust. “There just seems to be no money to fix up the school,” Principal Aubrey De Wet says. “Funds have always been such a large problem.” Unlike most other countries, South Africa demands a fee for any child to attend any school, whether public or private. In addition, schools already receive very minimal state funding. Therefore, it becomes very difficult for schools to offer any financial aid to their families that struggle to meet the school fees. Last year was the first year Fairview Primary ever had to turn down places for incoming students. And we think *our* education system has problems.

However, there are some very positive things about this specific school. Firstly, the school offers a range of intramural activities after hours. These activities are taught by gracious teachers who give their time up willingly and refuse payment. Teachers also stay with their same class of students from Grade 1 through Grade 3, which helps to compensate for such a large student-teacher ratio. Furthermore, the school refuses to use physical disciplinary action. De Wet explains that although this is one of the school’s unwritten policies, “corporal punishment is actually banned in South Africa and therefore must be implemented”. Finally, there is always a steady flow of volunteers passing through the school, whether they are placed by Projects Abroad, through other schools and universities around the world, or are independent travelers.

The volunteer work in the school has given me such a strong feeling of personal achievement and satisfaction. Teaching here has also taught me patience beyond what I ever thought I would be capable of at my age.

In fact, this entire adventure so far has been nothing short of amazing. Many people told me “traveling changes everything” before I left and even on my flight, but I never suspected just how right they would be. South Africa really has changed me. Being out of my comfort zone and experiencing this whole new world has given me a completely different perspective on life. Why did I ever care about what clothes I wore, or what kind of cell phone I had, or who was right in last night’s argument?

Here, clothes do not matter. Cell phones are all pay-as-you-go, and are too expensive to use frequently. The internet is a luxury. The train stations are packed with people but at least smell better than the London underground. Cars do not slow for pedestrians, no matter how young or old. Youngsters stray from safety without fear, running across streets, dodging traffic left and right. Stray dogs look both ways before they cross. At night, it is safer to go through red lights than to stop at them. The marketplaces are alive with locals and tourists. A stranger looking for attention calls out of his car asking where an attractive girl’s father is, and does he know she is out? Men wait at intersection stops to sell handmade crafts to people in their cars. Make up is almost nonexistent. Women stick by each other, and are always looking to offer advice. Time means little. Family means everything. A sunset on Signal Hill is a piece of artwork. A sunrise in Nature’s Valley is the presence of God. Culture is celebrated. Food is never wasted. Innocence is a gift. Forgiveness is essential. People are beautiful. Struggle is normality. Music is everywhere. Life is for the moment.

If I may offer only one piece of advice from my experience, it is this: explore humanity. Venture out of your little corner and get your hands dirty. Expose your eyes to the wonders of the world we live in. Eat things that disgust you. Try things that scare you. Get to know the kinds of people you judged before you even met them, and reassess. Reach out to anyone who reaches for you. Reach out even when they don’t reach for you.

And don’t bother planning it all out, because the best plans often go astray. Instead, be spontaneous, and experiment your way through life. The best things happen to us when we aren’t looking for them.

# Volunteer Stories

*Written by: Human Rights Volunteer Sandra Aigbinode*

They say it takes a minute to meet someone, a day to know them, a month to really like them, and a year to truly love them. I guess rules were made to be broken because for me it took less than a month to fall in love with the Jupiter dorm boys of "The Bonnytoun Place of Safety", an institution for juveniles awaiting trial. When we interns newly arrive from our different countries and are told of the various projects we are able to focus on during our stay with Projects Abroad, it is so easy for our humanitarian instincts to kick in and make us choose to help refugees, local communities, abused women and children, and other vulnerable persons, and that makes perfect sense. What we forget, including myself, is that these boys are products of those poor communities and abusive homes. A survey of the population within this institution will confirm this at a glance.

During one's first week at PAHRO (Projects Abroad Human Rights Office), it's seldom that you see someone who already knows what they have chosen to focus on for the whole duration of their stay. This is a good thing because it opens you up and gives you a chance to go to as many projects as possible, which inevitably helps you make a decision as to which project(s) you are interested in. I remember my very first visit to Bonnytoun with some other interns; we visited a dorm called 'S2' which had the older boys, age 17 and older. During our visit, a discussion came up about their crimes, and I remember how disappointed I was about the fact that they seemed impenitent of the crimes they had or had not committed. My disappointment led to discouragement soon after and I remember telling my roommate that I was unsure if this 'prisoners rights' project was in my capacity.

After expressing my concern with a supervisor at the institution, he recommended that I visit a dorm called 'Jupiter' which housed younger juveniles aged 14-15. He went on further to say that unfortunately these boys hardly had volunteer organizations visit them. Having a brother that age touched me and that was when I and another intern took it upon us to visit and hold workshops with these boys at least twice a week. To date, this is one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life. On our very first mission to Jupiter we had a very successful workshop on the topic "distinguishing between persons and things". It focused on power relations between men and women, older and younger persons, and other such relationships. That was the first day I truly comprehended that by imparting some positive values into the lives of these boys, we were making a difference. After our workshop that day, the boys asked if they could teach us a popular South African game entitled "Murderer". Remembering that moment always makes me laugh hysterically because I remember looking around at the faces of the other interns and they all looked very panicked and scared. Contrary to our expectations, the game was far from violent; it included a lot of dancing, smiling, and winking (literally the most important element in the game).

After four weeks of, interesting workshops with the boys; intense soccer matches that completely damaged some very pricey shoes; and very fun South African, Canadian, British, and German ice breaker games; it was extremely difficult to say goodbye when the time came to do so. I remember it was on my last visit there that one of the boys came up to me and poured his heart out to me. He told me about the things that were bothering him, how he was missing his family so much, his shoes were broken and he had nothing else to wear, and other issues he was going through at the time. At that moment, I knew there was little I could do for him, considering my flight back home was the very next day. I ended up buying him a pair of shoes and told him it was to symbolize his promise to me to stay out of trouble. That small gesture I hope will be that symbol of hope that someone out there loves him and believes in him.

# Recipe Corner

## WINTER MUTTON CURRY

We hope this dish will warm you up in this cold August weather we are having in Cape Town!

600 – 700g stewing mutton, cut into pieces  
 30 ml (2 T) oil  
 1 mutton or beef stock cube  
 750 – 1000 ml (3 – 4 cups) boiling water  
 salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
 250g fresh green beans, sliced  
 30 ml (2 T) seedless raisins  
 3 potatoes, cubed  
 1 onion, sliced into rings  
 10 ml (2 t) strong curry powder  
 pinch ground cloves  
 50 ml vinegar  
 3 bananas, sliced  
 15 ml (1 T) cornflour  
 50 ml water



Brown small quantities of the meat in the heated oil. Dissolve the stock cube in boiling water and pour half the stock over the meat. Reduce the heat and simmer until the meat is tender. Add extra stock and salt and pepper if necessary. Add the green beans, raisins and potatoes. Simmer until the vegetables are nearly tender. Meanwhile fry the onion in a little oil until golden brown. Add the curry powder and stir-fry for about 2 minutes more. Add the curry mixture to the meat mixture, along with the cloves, vinegar and bananas. Simmer for about 5 minutes or until cooked and warmed through. Dissolve the cornflour in the water and stir into the curry. Bring to the boil and simmer for another 5 minutes or until the gravy thickens slightly and is cooked.