

Jayne Gardner

MU Teach Abroad South Africa

Even though I only spent 3 weeks in South Africa, I can say it was one of the most important experiences I've had in terms of my development. I say this for a few different reasons. First, as a Student Affairs practitioner, I see the necessity of a transformational, out of the box experience. Second, I see the world as larger than I ever could have conceived before. Finally, I no longer let fear control my choices.

It was interesting to travel alone to South Africa. Honestly, I was terrified. When I finally exited my last flight into Johannesburg at 10 p.m. that evening, I actually cried. It seems silly now because I was never in any danger. I was just going through an extreme amount of boundary pushing all at once. Up to that point, I had only been on domestic flights and never alone. Looking back, I realize that it was so important for me to go through that because I had previously felt dependent and incapable of doing so many things before realizing the strength I had.

When I arrived in Cape Town within the next few days after having spent several days in Kruger National Park. I gained a true appreciation for how large the country of South Africa and the continent of Africa truly is. When I say large, I don't just mean in geographic size but also in diversity of thought, experiences, values, daily life. Each of these differences just as equal as the next. The United States and my own identity is situated in a more global community that values different ways of knowing and living now.

Finally, because of the transformation I was going through, I was acutely aware of the transformational experiences that the undergraduate students were experiencing as well. This

confirmed and strengthened my belief that student development occurs at an exponential rate during experiences such as Study Abroad, multicultural dialogues and course, etc. In my role as a student affairs practitioner, I will strive to follow the model that has been set for me by this program in pushing boundaries in order to help students transform themselves into responsible, passionate and effective global leaders.