

S. Leigh Heathcote
Cornell College
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Dear Class of '55,

Thank you for your generous support of my off-campus course. Your award helped fund my participation in Southern African Art and Culture in Context, an English course taught in South Africa and Namibia.

I am currently a senior majoring in chemistry and biochemistry/molecular biology. I hope to pursue a career in the natural sciences after graduating from Cornell, but I also hope to be a well-rounded citizen who continues to learn about art, literature and culture throughout her life, and I believe my participation in this course is congruous with the liberal arts education Cornell promotes.

This course allowed me to study southern African literature and to place this literature in the context of the culture it comes from. Hearing a South African speak about the physical and emotional hardships he still faces as a result of fighting against apartheid helped me understand the immediate relevance of literature dealing with apartheid and its aftermath. Hearing a kind, gentle African voice his belief that sometimes men simply lose control and should not be held accountable for rape helped me understand the importance of feminist southern African literature. Seeing brother, sister and aunt sleep together on a small mat on the floor during a homestay helped me understand that the characters in a book who have to live in very tight quarters do not represent an anomaly; instead, many southern Africans may find these characters easy to relate to. Traveling really helped me better understand the meaning and relevance of southern African literature.

In addition to helping me understand the relevance of southern African literature, traveling abroad for this course has made me more aware of other cultures. Certainly I have learned more about southern African culture, but I am also much more attuned to the fact that there are many cultures in the world other than my own. This course provided me with the most exposure to non-American culture I have had in my life. I am now much more comfortable as a global citizen and as a global traveler; this trip has not only increased my knowledge of the world but has also made me more comfortable putting myself in unfamiliar cultures to continue to learn more about the world.

Traveling abroad to study Southern African Art and Culture in Context greatly enhanced my understanding of southern African literature and made me a much more aware global citizen. Thank you again for your generous support of this trip.

Sincerely,

S. Leigh Heathcote