

July 2016 began what would become the best experience of my life. Traveling halfway across the world, I was able to become a member of the University of Cape Town's community. Through a new educational lens I was able to gather new perspectives on global and international politics. As a Political Science major from the University of California, Santa Barbara, I fit right in to the new environment.

As the semester approached its halfway point, protests across campus and across the nation began in support of the #feesmustfall movement. The movement favours free decolonized education for all South African students who wish to receive access to universities such as UCT. Many of the protests reached high levels of intensity and even became violent. As an international student, the situation was both new and in some ways inspiring.

While the disruptions of the protests effectively brought the semester to a stand still for four weeks, one cannot ignore the spirit of those who protested peacefully for what they believe. Violence and destruction cannot be encouraged; however, peaceful dedication to a more just society **MUST** be encouraged. Whatever your political beliefs, admiration should be felt for those who are willing to stand up for their convictions, even when their voices are often ignored.

I along with several fellow UCT international students had the opportunity to meet with U.S. Ambassador Patrick Gaspard to discuss the current situation in South Africa. The Ambassador was full of inspiring and phenomenal stories of his days as a protestor in the United States. The conversation touched upon both sides of the current movement in South Africa. Even though classes were suspended for four weeks and ultimately the university was forced to move all classes online, my real South African educational experience occurred outside of the

classroom. Living in an often turbulent, yet vibrant, political society, I became completely immersed in the country. After all that's the goal of all UCEAP programs--to allow students to become immersed in another country's society. As a result of my five months here in Cape Town that are fast approaching their end, I would recommend this program to every single person who asks me. Life, education, exploration, laughter, and most importantly, understanding, have all deemed this experience one I will never forget.

